BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction

June, 1951
25 Cents

Cover Design . . . Men of America—**David Crockett**
Painted by ***Benton Clark***

A complete book-length novel
HELL-BENT FOR ELECTION
by Edward S. Fox
KISS OF THE SCORPION
by Sax Rohmer

Ten short stories, many articles and features

MEN OF AMERICA—DAVID CROCKETT

Coonskin Congressman

ONE of the great American traditions is the saga of David Crockett—frontiersman, politician, humorist, and hero of the Alamo. Yet what portion of this tradition is fact, and what portion fancy, is difficult to appraise; for in Crockett's several campaigns for election to Congress, he habitually won the attention and approval of his frontier audiences by his jovial exaggerations and prodigious tall stories.

"Don't shoot, Davy—I'll come down," the raccoon was reputed to have protested when Crockett raised his fabulously accurate rifle.

"I'm that same David Crockett, fresh from the backwoods," ran his variation of the traditional frontiersman's boast, "—half-horse, half-alligator, a little touched with snapping-turtle; can wade the Mississippi, leap the Ohio, ride upon a streak of lightning; can whip my weight in wildcats—and if any gentleman pleases, for a ten-dollar bill, he may throw in a panther."

The remarks he is said to have made as a Congressman are likewise characteristic: "My father can whip any man in Kentucky, and I can lick my father. . . . I can outspeak any man on this floor, and give him two hours' start. I can run faster, dive deeper, stay under longer, and come out dryer than any man this side of the big swamp." And again: "Congress allows lemonade to the members and has it charged under the head of stationery. I move that whisky also be allowed under the item of fuel."

The facts of David Crockett's life are also typical of his time: Born in Tennessee in 1786, the son of an Irish immigrant who had fought in the Revolution, he ran away from home at thirteen, but returned three years later and worked for a year as a hired hand to pay his father's debts. He went to school for all of six months in an attempt to win favor with a girl of the neighborhood, but she seems not to have been impressed. Later he married Polly Findlay, rented land, and with indifferent enthusiasm and success tried his hand at farming.

Crockett served as a scout under Andrew Jackson in the war with the Creek Indians in 1813-'14. His wife died in 1815; and not long afterward he provided for his motherless children by marrying a widow with two of her own. He moved again and again, each time farther West. In Giles County he was made justice of the peace; and in 1823, in another location near the Mississippi, he took time off from hunting bears to campaign successfully for the Legislature. . . . This was the beginning of his political career: In 1827 he won a seat in the national Congress, and was reelected in 1829. He lost the election of 1831, but won again in 1833, and made a journey to visit the Eastern cities. In 1835 he was defeated again—and made his last hazard in search of new fortunes. For Texas had started its War of Independence, and that wide wild Western land had a strong attraction for a man like David Crockett. . . . So it came about that on March 6th, 1836, along with twelve other volunteers who had followed him from Tennessee, he was killed in the final assault upon the church at the Alamo.

Readers' Comment

More Articles?

ABOUT the most readable magazine on the American market today is BLUE BOOK. I digest it, monthly, not only for its splendid stories and features, but for the comfort in reading it for its size of paper and type.

The book as a whole is well balanced, with exception of a few changes I would like to suggest: More articles of Fact and Experience, and less short stories. More of the truth and realities of life in this trying age, so often need to be read and would be read by those less interested in fiction. The various subjects employed by your writers of Fact and Experience in the past have been most interesting and worth-while, and many I have kept for future reference. They are to be commended for their patient research, and consistent presentation of the material.

Many worthy facts and experiences of the past too often have been overlooked. But thanks to BLUE BOOK for keeping pace with this changing world.

Nathan Oppleman

Pass It On

UPON finishing BLUE BOOK every month and completely enjoying every article and story in each edition, I pass on this enjoyment to our bed-confined veterans, by simply rolling up each copy and addressing it:

Manager
Att.: Chief Librarian
Veterans Administration Hospital
(Location of the nearest hospital)

I suggest that many of my fellow readers of BLUE BOOK do this, instead of destroying their copies, as this helps the day to pass much faster for the men; and according to the letter I received from the Manager of Lyons Hospital in New Jersey, they appreciate BLUE BOOK.

Sanford E. Gold

They Have Him Guessing

I THOUGHT I was getting a fine magazine when I bought BLUE BOOK but now I'm wondering.

That evening when I came home there was no supper. My wife, buried in BLUE BOOK, asked why I was home early. Actually it was late, so we had to go out for dinner. After dinner my son read the book. He didn't do his home work and next morning we woke up in a cold house; he hadn't tended the furnace either. He took that magazine to school to show something to his teacher. A friend borrowed it. Now three weeks later it is still passing around, and I've never seen between the covers!

L. V. Campbell

BLUE BOOK

June, 1951 — MAGAZINE — Vol. 93, No. 2

A Complete Book-Length Novel

Ten Short Stories

Stories of Fact and Experience

Special Features

The short stories and novel herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

PHILLIPS WYMAN, *Publisher* DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is published each month simultaneously in the United States and Canada by McCall Corporation. Marvin Pierce, President; Lowell Shumway, Vice-President and Circulation Director; Francis Hutter, Secretary; J. D. Hartman, Treasurer. Publication and Subscription Offices: McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. Executive and Editorial Offices, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y. MANUSCRIPTS and ART MATERIAL will be carefully considered but will be received only with the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury. SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: $2.50 for one year; $4.00 for two years; $6.00 for three years in U. S., Canada and Pan-American countries (Add $1.00 per year for other countries). Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions to our publication office, McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. IF YOU PLAN TO MOVE SOON please notify us four weeks in advance because subscription lists are addressed in advance of publication date and extra postage is charged for forwarding. When sending notice of change of address give old address as well as new, preferably clipping name and old address from last copy received. JUNE ISSUE, 1951. VOL. LXXXXIII, NO. 2.

Printed in U. S. A.
Entered as second-class matter November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879

THE DISTINGUISHED AUTHOR OF "THE BAT FLIES LOW," "MOON OF MADNESS" AND THE FU MANCHU STORIES IS AT HIS BEST IN THIS FINE STORY OF OLD-TIME ITALY.

Kiss of the

"IS it true, Messer Rimini, that he had a secret thrust which no other swordsman could execute, and one which made him invincible?" Lorenzo asked.

Messer Rimini glanced up at the dark, eager face, and nodded slowly.

"The *Carezza di scorpio.* So-called because it was a cunning feint performed by disengaging at a certain moment and bringing the blade down like a lash—or like the tail of a scorpion. The point pierced his opponent's wrist, and so disarmed him. I am glad, Lorenzo, that you are interested, for a young man needs his sword in Pisa today."

"I was told at the fencing school that Maestro Villani never taught the *Carezza di scorpio.*"

"The feint demanded great dexterity—and great courage. It may be that few could learn it."

Lorenzo sighed. "That is possible. What, then, became of the maestro, Messer Rimini?"

Old Rimini bent closer over his work, and before he answered, finished a bold line about the massive sword-hilt he was fashioning. A Tuscan lamp cast a circle of light upon the bench. Within the circle glowed a golden crucifix, still unfinished; within it moved nervous, sinewy hands extracting cunning tracery from reluctant metal; and every now and again came a gleam upon the aquiline nose and high, burnished forehead of old Rimini himself.

"Some say, Lorenzo," he answered, in his deep, slow tones, "that having killed his own brother, not knowing him for it, he entered a monastery to expiate the sin."

"Villani of Turin a monk!"

"I do not assert it," Rimini added, reaching for a finer tool; "but some say so. It was eighteen years ago he vanished from the world."

"But his memory is fresh today!" Lorenzo spoke enthusiastically. "Would we had another Villani to deal with this vaunting Bresca!"

"Villani was no assassin!" Rimini spoke sternly. "He was all his life an enemy to the *bravo.* Further, the Duke of Bresca, then a lad, was his pupil; and who knows but today the pupil may excel the master?"

"Bresca his pupil!" Lorenzo hushed his voice. "Well, then, he may be as he claims—the first swordsman in Christendom!"

"How so?" The old man smiled, his deep-set eyes gleaming amusedly. "You would seem to believe this Villani a magician, making wizards of all who crossed blades with him in friendship!"

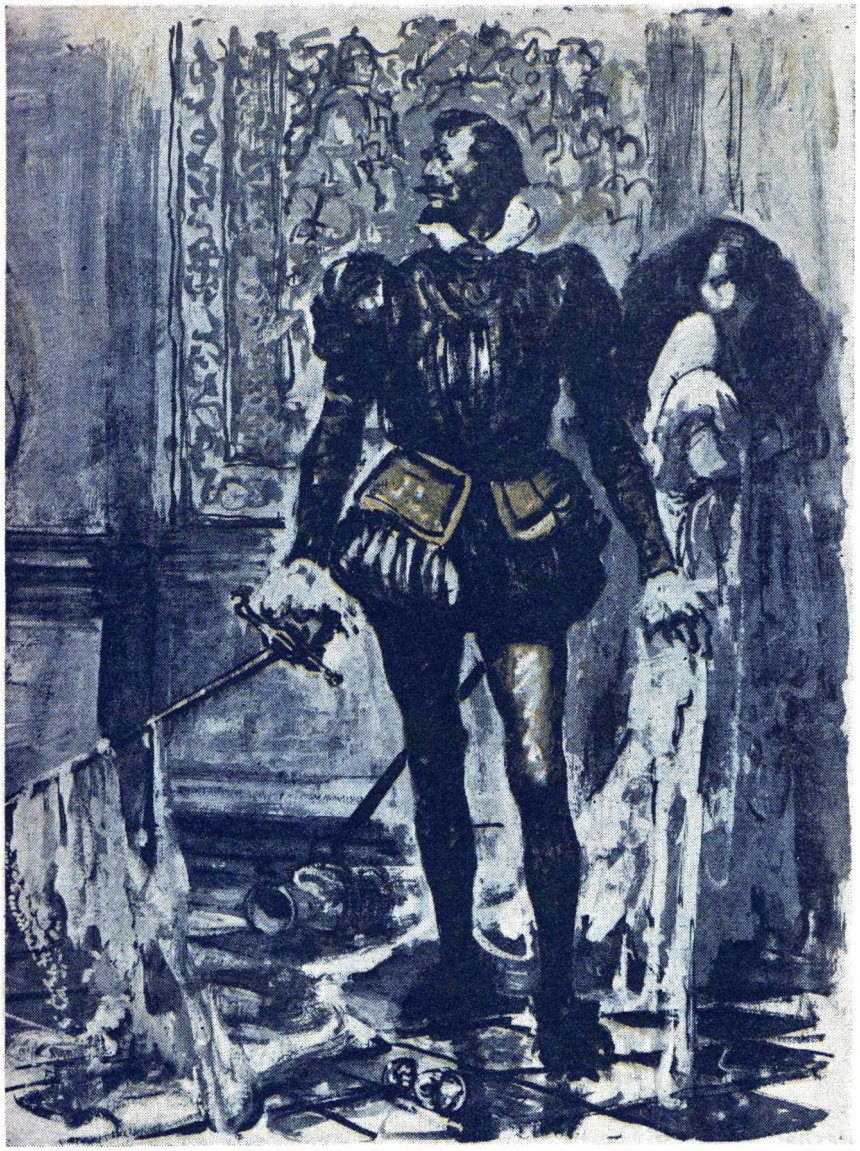
Lorenzo shook his head, sighing.

"I hate Cesare, Duke of Bresca!" he said fervently.

"Why?" Rimini's tone grew suddenly abrupt.

But before the younger man could reply, and while hot words burned upon his tongue, Moorish hangings were thrust aside and a slim figure draped in clinging white appeared in the low doorway. Out of the shadows the girl moved forward, a heavy Arab girdle she wore marking the sweep of her supple shape.

Dropping to her knees upon the thick mats, she leaned forward into



Scorpion

by SAX ROHMER

the circle of light, her elbows on the table, her chin upon her hands. The olive face formed a pure oval. The small aquiline nose and fine nostrils, almond-shaped eyes and bright red lips, all betrayed her Eastern blood. She was, but for her fairer skin, a replica of her beautiful Arab mother who had died in giving her birth.

"It is finished, Francesca." Rimini watched her fondly. "But the hour is too late now for you to venture forth."

"But, Father, it was promised—and Lorenzo can come with me!"

Old Rimini fondled the hilt, his fingers lingering, loverlike, about the twists and fancies of the design.

"What say you, Lorenzo?" he questioned.

The young man, his eager eyes feasting upon Francesca's loveliness, shrugged his shoulders uneasily. She raised heavy lashes and flashed a glance into the shadows toward him.

"It will be safe enough!" He spoke quickly. "'Tis but just dusk outside."

Rimini laughed softly.

"You have your mother's eyes, Francesca! Wrap yourself up closely, and hurry. Lorenzo—take good care of her."

The girl picked up the finished work, and bending across the table, kissed her father. She drew aside the curtain and went out. For a moment Lorenzo paused, looking back to where old Rimini's eagle face shone in the lamplight. Something troubled him. But he quitted the room without speaking. . . .

Dusk lay heavy upon Pisa when they came into the street, and a million starry lamps were alight in the deep blue heavens. A breeze from the Arno refreshed the heated air.

Where the cathedral's bulk blotted out the sky, they stopped.

Shadows, keen-edged, lay upon the stone-paved street, as Lorenzo slipped his arm about Francesca, drawing her closely to him. She looked up into his eyes, the hood of her cloak falling back. Her teeth gleamed through parted lips, and he bent to kiss her—proud of her dark beauty, proud of the love she had given him.

"*Ssh!*" she whispered; and lifted a finger in warning. He started, bending his head to listen.

A faint scuffling upon the cobbles of a neighboring court told of some hidden watcher.

"Let us hurry!" Francesca whispered.

Lorenzo made no protest; and they hurried onward.

The girl was piqued that he should so lightly forgo her kisses, and something of this he divined. "You are angry, Francesca?" he said.

Womanlike, she would admit no anger from such a cause.

"Why should I be?" she asked. "'Tis ill to dally in the streets of Pisa after dusk!"

Her mocking words stung him, and he quickly threw his arm around her shoulders and held her so for a moment. When she laughed in his face he knew that her pique was passed; and though no friendly shadows were there, he claimed her red lips, which were passionately given.

"Villani was no assassin!" Rimini spoke sternly. "He was all his life an enemy to the bravo."

Coming to the house of Messer Rimini's client, they made an end of their business there and set out upon the homeward way. The narrow streets were quite deserted, and Lorenzo looked about him, and over his shoulder, suspiciously.

"Do you fear robbers, Lorenzo?" the girl asked.

But he shook his head uneasily.

BESIDE the cathedral they passed in silence. The cobbles where the sharp edge of the shadows had lain were swallowed up now in the creeping blackness.

Francesca's little hand sought, in the gloom, for that of her lover, and found it. He raised the clinging fingers to his lips.

They stood upon the spot from which they had heard those shuffling feet.

Something sinuous and gleaming showed momentarily in the gulf of the alley.

"Santa Madonna!" Francesca whispered.

In an instant, they were surrounded by cloaked figures.

One high, shrill scream she gave, and a hand was clapped over her mouth. Two of the cloaked men seized and bore her off down a dark passage. Drawing his sword, Lorenzo made a frantic endeavor to cut his way through the others and follow. No mean swordsman, he disarmed the first who made at him and knocked the man senseless with the flat of his weapon. A second he dispatched in his fury, passing the long blade through his opponent's body. Two more remained; and one of them, at a word from his companion, made off—leaving the other alone.

With a shout of rage, Lorenzo leaped forward. Every moment's delay maddened him: he felt within him the strength of ten men.

The blades crossed. And in that crossing Lorenzo knew he had met his master.

Furiously he lunged; cleverly he feinted. But with scarce an effort the cloaked swordsman parried his leaping blade. The moments sped on. Lorenzo's heart was near to bursting at the thought of Francesca—by now far away. With renewed fury he pressed upon his opponent, while he prayed silently, and to a strange god: he prayed to the spirit of the master swordsman, Villani of Turin.

The other yielded not an inch, standing quietly on the defensive.

Then, from the blackness of the night, came a shrill whistle.

At this signal his antagonist took the offensive, and passing, serpentine, beneath Lorenzo's guard, pierced his breast. As he lunged, his upraised cloak did not serve fully to conceal his features; and the moonlight touched a dark, handsome face.

Lorenzo dropped his weapon and clasped one hand to the wound. With an arm thrown out, he lurched and fell. But as darkness came upon him, he knew that the flamelike blade was that of Cesare, Duke of Bresca.

UTTER blackness—the clash of swords—a moaning cry—suffocation: these were the progressive stages through which Francesca returned to full consciousness.

She opened her eyes, but it was dark. Her cloak had been wrapped closely about her head. Through the thin stuff she could detect a cool, fitful breeze. It came from the Arno. Someone carried her in his arms—toward the river.

Lorenzo! Had they killed Lorenzo? "Heaven spare him to me!" she prayed.

Physical resistance she knew must be useless. Who her captors were or what might be the place to which they carried her, she could not imagine. Her native subtlety told her that she must seem to be still in a swoon. The blood of a race of Arab fighters coursed hotly through her veins, sweeping all fear from her heart. She was only a girl; yet if they had killed Lorenzo, he should not go unavenged.

They were come, now, to the river's bank. Francesca could hear the water lapping upon the stones of a quay.

"Lay her down," said a peremptory voice.

She was laid upon the hard smooth stones.

Illustrated by JOHN FULTON

A hand drew the cloak away from about her head, and through long lashes she saw the night sky with its myriad dancing stars, and was blinded by the brilliance of the moon. It shone full upon her, and, dazzled, she closed her eyes tightly; but not before she had recognized the face of him who bent over her.

"Saints in heaven!" he whispered. "How beautiful she is!"

Francesca shuddered.

"Place her in the stern of the boat, Paolo! Sacu is dead. Strip off his livery and throw him in the river. May his soul rest in peace. I have passed my sword through the fond fool who killed him."

An icy grip seized Francesca's heart, squeezing it cold. For all her Eastern stoicism, she could not choke down the hard, dry sob that pulsed in her throat—that strangled her.

"She recovers!"

But she kept her eyes tightly closed and lay limply in the arms of the man who now lifted her from the ground.

Passing her to another, who stood below, the first fellow released her; and Francesca, in a quick glance, saw the dark waters of the Arno gleaming beneath her. A sudden twist—and she could be free! The river's cold arms would take her; the icy water would cool her throbbing brain. Lorenzo. . . .

"Not yet!" she murmured, and set her teeth together, clenching her hands convulsively.

They laid her upon soft cushions and through the heavy fringe of her lashes she watched them lowering an insensible man from above. Beyond, on the quay, two other men bent over something rigid and still, and as she watched, they raised the body by head and heels and with a long swing cast it into the river.

The dead man's livery was passed down, the moonlight toying for a moment with the golden raven of the crest. Then they all swung on board, and the leader took his place beside Francesca.

"Give way."

The oars dipped, casting ever-widening silver crescents out upon the slow tide, and the boat moved heavily seaward.

A white hand stroked Francesca's hair softly, seeking out elusive strands of dully gleaming copper.

She choked with loathing—but was still.

"Swallow."

The burning cordial gripped his throat, and Lorenzo, with a harsh gasp, opened his eyes.

Old Rimini bent over him, his eagle face drawn and stern.

"How have I come here?" Lorenzo whispered; for he lay in the house of the goldsmith.

Rimini nodded toward a white-robed Arab who stood statuesque in the doorway.

"When it grew so late, I dispatched Abdul to search for you. He carried you here."

Then, as a giant's blow, it all came back to the wounded man.

"Francesca! He has her! O God! She is in the hands of Cesare Brescal"

He sat up—to fall back again upon the cushions, groaning. Feebly he raised his left hand to his brow. The right was bandaged and strapped motionless across his breast.

His head, too, was swathed in linen.

"The cobbles saved you," Rimini said. "He left you for dead."

"I owe you my life!"

"Simple surgery. The art of fashioning gold was not all that I learned during ten years in the desert. Be still, now, and tell me—which way did they carry her?"

"To the river. He has taken her to the Villa Coronna!"

The father's deep-set eyes gleamed strangely.

"Merciful God," he muttered, "grant that I be in time!"

He drew up his lean form to its full height, raising his eyes and praying a moment, silently.

"Remain here, Lorenzo," he directed. "You did all that man could do. Abdul—there is work for us!"

The Arab's immobile features lighted up and, like a white phantom, he glided from the room after his master.

Out into Pisa's empty streets they passed, the old goldsmith wrapped in his cloak and Abdul clothed in his simple, snowy garments. In silence they made their way on past the cathedral; and at the head of the alley where he had found Lorenzo, the Arab paused and pointed. Rimini nodded, and plunged forward into the black gully.

With many a sinuous winding, it came, ultimately, to the river's brink, and the two stood upon a quay and looked out upon the whispering waters of the Arno. The Arab spoke rapidly, indicating a boat that strained at its moorings in the outgoing tide. Rimini nodded again, and Abdul laid hold upon the rope, pulling the boat close in to the quay.

He held it so while his master, with wonderful agility, clambered in; then he, too, entered the boat and cast off the rope.

THE rapidly moving tide bore them swiftly downstream, making sculling almost unnecessary.

Where the current raced around the northern bend they made in under the left bank, and Rimini stood up, peering far ahead of them while Abdul rested upon his oars, and the boat glided softly onward, the only sound being that of the water dripping from the oar-blades.

In this way they crept up to a landing-stage where another boat lay already moored.

No one was in sight.

"Hold fast!"

The Arab's brown hand gripped the stage, staying their onward progress.

Rimini stepped lightly over and made the boat secure.

Up the steps they went and across an intervening patch of ground overgrown with weeds and wild flowers, to the massive gate that showed before them in the moonlight. Through its twisted bars they could see, nestling amid banks of brilliant bloom, the small marble portico of the Villa Coronna.

"Back!" Rimini whispered. "You know what to do!"

As though swallowed up by the earth, Abdul vanished; the night knew him no more. Snakelike, he lay concealed amongst tangled weeds and exotic grasses.

Rimini strode boldly up to the gate. A man-at-arms leaned upon a pike, inside.

"The Bresca is cautious!" the old man muttered.

"Ho, there!" the guard challenged. "What is your business?"

"My business is with the Duke."

"Come tomorrow, good man. None may see the Duke tonight!" And the guard laughed evilly.

"Lorenzo can come with me," said Francesca.

"I bear his ring as warranty."

"Show it!"

"Then open the gate."

"I can see it without."

"Cur! You fear a white head!"

Those sudden venomous words sped to their mark. Hotly enraged, the guard lunged through the bars with his pike. Quick as a cat, Rimini had the shaft from his hands.

"A pretty pikeman!" he taunted.

Home went the key in the lock. Trembling in his eagerness to murder this offensive old man, the guard swung the gate open and leaped out. As he did so, Rimini turned and ran. The guard followed close upon his heels, stumbling among long weeds.

As his short sword swept up and his hand was outstretched to seize Rimini's flying cloak, a white shape sprang pantherlike, at his throat. One

"It will be safe enough!" Lorenzo spoke up quickly. " 'Tis but just dusk outside."

hoarse, rattling cry he gave—and he dropped.

Abdul rose from the weed-forest and silently followed his master through the open gate of the Villa Coronna.

"CAN you not forgive me?"

Francesca opened her eyes, languidly. Her brain was cool. Through Pisa's streets she had made no bid for freedom, nor cried out—well knowing that no man's hand would be raised in defence of one whose captors wore the Bresca livery. Now, she had had an hour to reflect, and in that hour she had determined upon the course she would follow. But it was a difficult part to play.

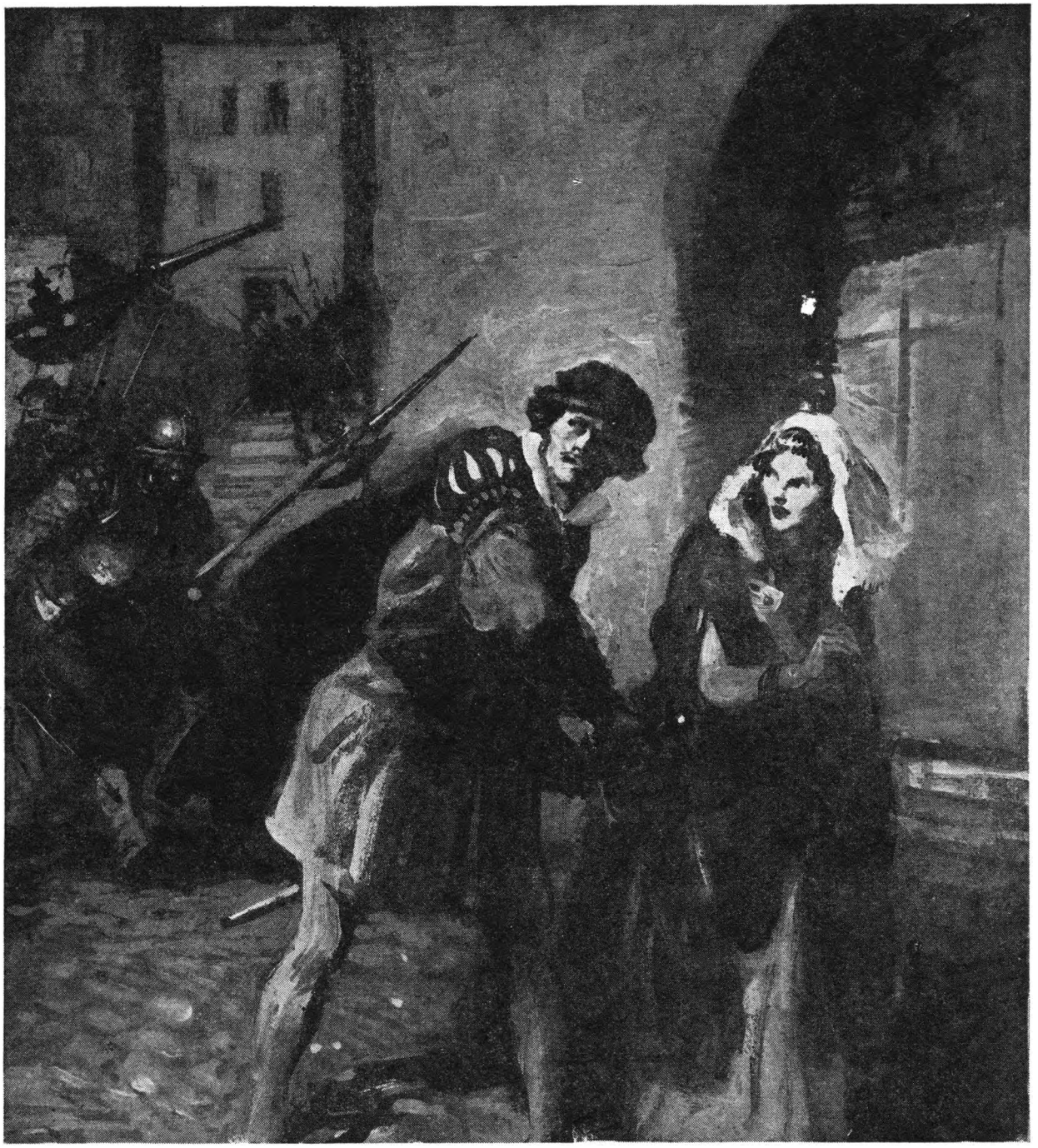
The Duke knelt at her feet, holding both her hands in his own. He was magnificently dressed and his handsome face glowed with ardor.

She screamed and shrank from him. Snatching her hand away, she pressed it to her heart and fell back among the soft cushions.

Cesare Bresca struck a bell sharply, and a page entered.

"Wine," the Duke ordered, in pantomime; and the boy, a beautiful deaf-mute, withdrew.

The apartment to which Francesca had been carried was spacious and



splendidly furnished. Its marble floor was strewn with choice skins and fine Eastern rugs. And rare objects of beauty, such as women love, were displayed about in profusion.

"Have no fear for your friend," the Duke continued; "he is safe. In truth," he added, lightly, "his safety was the prime object of consideration with him. His kisses are more deadly than his blows, and he did not even tarry to draw blade."

"Santa Madonna!" Francesca whispered. Then they were surrounded.

Francesca, who knew that he lied, remained with her head thrown back. Though she feigned to swoon, the Arab blood in her veins was dancing madly. She was thinking—thinking how she could kill him.

How she longed for the cunning lean brown hands of Abdul—of Abdul, who had borne her in his arms through the palm groves, who had once, with those hands of steel, crushed the life from a great leopard that menaced her. But Abdul was not here; and Lorenzo—

At thought of Lorenzo a spasm of agony passed through her body.

The page entering with wine, the Duke raised a brimming goblet to her lips; and unable to control her bursting hatred, she struck it from his hand and leaped up, confronting him.

"So!" he said, falling back; "we have recovered our spirits!"

Beautiful in her passion, she stood before him with blazing eyes.

"You are loathsome," she said softly. "Your very presence offends me!"

He flinched. Reproaches, tears, entreaties, he had expected. But such words as these from a woman were adder-toothed to a man of Cesare Bresca's character.

Turning abruptly, he walked to the open window, and looked out over the balcony, at the banks of flowers in the garden, below.

THIS was her opportunity. Softly, his captive came upon him; not a sound did her light footsteps make. The shapely arm crept forward—nearer—nearer: slim fingers closed upon the hilt of the dagger in his belt. In a flash she had it!

The Duke leaped aside with a short cry—as the gleaming blade flashed down, piercing his wrist and ripping the velvet sleeve.

"Tigress!"

He snatched out his sword but just in time to parry a second furious blow.

And now began a strange *duello.*

Francesca, regardless of the Duke's sword, struck again and again with the dagger. He, fearful of marring the beauty of those rounded arms, parried cautiously. Every attempt that she made to reach him with the point revealed some new beauty of her graceful shape; and wearying of this play with his beautiful opponent, he struck the dagger from her hand by a lightning feint.

"You did not expect that!" he laughed, and bound a kerchief about his wounded wrist. "A trick I learned of that great swordsman Villani of Turin!"

She stood motionless, watching him.

"See,"—he picked up the fallen dagger—"here is another!"

In one swift slash he ripped Francesca's robe open from neck to hem . . .

Then her shamed womanhood asserted itself, would brook no denial. Francesca threw herself upon the silken cushions in an abandonment of passionate weeping, trying to hide herself with the torn robe.

"Why do you waste your passion?" The Duke spoke in a low voice. "My love for you knows no bounds and will not be resisted. I have sought an opportunity of speech with you for months, but our brave friend who ran away tonight has always succeeded in meddling. Like a mendicant I have lain in the loggia Medina, watching the light at your window. Have I not haunted your father's shop—he who always avoided me—seeking a glance—a crumb to comfort my starving soul? I have burned to tell you you were beautiful: you have scorned me. Now I have made an opportunity. Save for a page, and two men-at-arms—one of whom is at the river gate—we have the Villa Coronna to ourselves—you and I. It is yours, beautiful Francesca. Accept it from me as a gift!"

Francesca crouched, face averted, and heard the Duke approaching her. He knelt beside her, strove to caress her. . . .

Then he paused, for a sound in the gardens below had attracted his attention.

It was as of a hurried scuffling, followed by a dull thud—like that of a falling body.

"Malediction!" Cesare Bresca ran to the window. "What is that?"

Leaning forward, he peered out into the shadows beneath him; and it came into Francesca's mind that a shrewd thrust would pitch him into the garden below. She was stealthily rising to her feet—when a strange thing happened.

The door hangings were torn aside, and Abdul entered—followed by her father!

"Father!" she cried; and the perfumed room swam around her.

IN three panther leaps Abdul was upon the Duke. But the first swordsman in Italy was not to be taken so. Round he spun, and his sword was out. Taking a quick step rearward, he recovered and lunged like lightning.

The Arab threw himself back. In doing so he struck his head upon a marble-topped table bearing a Moorish lamp. The table overturned and the lamp fell, shattered, spilling its odorous oil about the floor.

Abdul lay still, moonlight shining down upon him.

Cesare Bresca, baring his teeth like an angry dog, strode toward Messer Rimini.

"No! *No!* Mercy! No!" Francesca screamed, and threw herself on her

"No! No! Mercy! No!" Francesca screamed. "'Tis my father! He is an old man!"

knees before the Duke. "'Tis my father! He is an old man!"

He hurled her aside.

"Silence, Francesca!" It was Rimini's voice. "Stand back and fear nothing. God is with us!"

The girl fell upon the breast of the unconscious Arab, trembling, fearful, as the clash of blades told of an unequal contest begun.

"*Santa Madonna!* He will murder him! Thou hast taken my love: spare my father!" she prayed. "Spare him!"

With hands tightly clasped she knelt with her head bowed—praying—and listening; she dared not look.

And so it happened that as she listened, she wondered; and her wonder grew until it was so great that she ventured to look. For it seemed to her that her father was holding his own; that an old man whose days were spent fashioning goldware was proving the equal of Cesare, Duke of Bresca—called the Invincible!

Squarely set in the door stood the tall, gaunt figure of Rimini, half in shadow; and before him, moonlight falling upon his lithe body and revealing the strange play of emotion across his face, was Cesare Bresca.

Like a man possessed, he fought—leaping, lunging, feinting, with extraordinary agility and skill. And, wonder of wonders, Messer Rimini's tireless blade, seemingly governed by a wrist of steel, made light of his vaunted skill, parrying the murderous thrusts, defeating the subtle tricks of swordplay that had won for the Duke his deadly reputation.

Francesca's prayers died away upon her lips, words frozen in sheer wonder. Abdul moved and opened his eyes; but scarce had Francesca time to be grateful, so vast was her amazement at what was going forward.

"The Carezza di scorpio!" *the terror-stricken man shrieked. "Save me! Save me!"*

BRESCA'S black eyes were starting from his head. Beads of sweat stood out upon his forehead. A pallor, made more ghastly by the moon's rays, had crept over the bronzed face.

Fear had him in its grip; grim fear of this whiteheaded swordsman who, half in the shadow of the door, played with *him*—with Cesare Bresca, who acknowledged no master in Europe at the art of fence!

It was more than his superstitious nature could support. He thought of the evil that he had done, of the lives that he had ruined; and he thought, as that snake-like blade foiled his own, that this was retribution.

"O God, save me!" burst in a sudden scream from his pale lips. "'Tis Satan!"

With the words barely spoken, he made a last frenzied lunge *en tierce.* It was evaded, not parried. Messer Rimini's blade swept up, swept down—and the point pierced Bresca's wrist. His sword fell from his paralyzed fingers as the tip of Rimini's blade was brought lightly to the Duke's throat.

"The *Carezza di scorpio!*" The terror-stricken man shrieked and fell babbling to the floor. "I am fighting with the devil! Save me! Save me!"

Face averted from his shadowy enemy, he crawled upon his knees to Francesca. Blood spurted from the wound in his wrist. "Pray for me!" he muttered, wild-eyed. "'Tis not your father, there; 'tis the Fiend! There is no living man can execute the *Carezza!* Pray for me! Pray!"

"Look!" It was Rimini's deep, stern voice. And the tall figure moved forward into the direct light of the moon. "Look well!"

Kneeling still, muttering, fearful, Cesare Bresca glanced over his shoulder.

Francesca saw a sudden strange expression creep into his madly glazed eyes. Rising slowly to his feet, he looked long and earnestly. He looked at Francesca and at the Arab, now recovering from his fall.

Then, yet again, he stared at that eagle face bathed in the pale light.

He crossed himself.

"Mother of mercy!" he mumbled. "Villani of Turin!"

He began to laugh. His laughter was awful to hear. . . .

Quite a Killing

The racetrack detective was sure that something very strange was going on. And he was right—for the Professor had learned to talk to horses in their own language.

by COLIN LOFTING

NEAR a group of huddling hide yurts, pitched close together among some huge boulders, a group of Mongolian tribesmen had gathered about a white man. One of the tribesmen—evidently the chief—was saying goodby in a mixture of sing-song native words and a sprinkling of English. The white man smiled, and from time to time nodded in appreciation.

When the speech was over, he shook hands with all the men. Then he walked over to a crude corral that was filled with shaggy horses hardly larger than ponies. He made a curious noise, and all the horses lifted their heads and looked at him. The tribesmen grinned and gave approving grunts. Then the white man turned and said:

"I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your kindness and patience. You have taught me something very rare. I have to leave and make some money to continue my research. Some day I shall be back."

Then he turned and joined one small group which was waiting beside several horses that were saddled. Four of the horses carried packs. He mounted one of the horses, and the small procession started down the rocky slope. The tribesmen watched, and occasionally they'd wave until the party wound down the mountainside and out of sight.

McCLOSKY first saw the Professor during that hour in the racing secretary's office when the morning line is drawn and the overnights are printed on the mimeographed sheets. While the numbers are drawn from leather bottles—for post positions and to see who gets in the race—the secretary's office comes alive. The jocks' agents stop playing gin outside on the

benches under the big trees, and they all gather around the counter trying to pick up a ride—that might still be open—for the diminutive bandits they have in tow at the time. The conversation is split between the entries for tomorrow's races and the terrible shame it was to put down such a hand while playing gin. To hear them all, you'd never guess that anyone had anything but a winning hand.

McClosky walked into the secretary's office and sat down on a bench. Just coming out from behind the green curtain, behind which you made your entries, came a man in a frayed linen suit with a large floppy Panama hat set squarely on his head. He had long white hair swept back from his temples. His kindly, amused eyes moved slowly behind rimless glasses that were clamped on his large nose and hung around his neck by a black ribbon.

McCLOSKY had never seen him before, and it was McClosky's job to know everyone. He whispered, behind his hand, to the jocks' agent, sitting next to him:

"And who is the fugitive from South Pacific?"

"You mean to tell me, Mac, you haven't heard about the Professor? Why he's the new topic of conversation around the track. He just bought that outlaw, Rusticon, from the Austins, and he's something! I heard he took the trainer's examination three times before he passed it and they'd give him a license. He's English, and talks like a sissy. He lives in his tack-room; and except for Rusticon and a track pony, he ain't got any stock. He doesn't know where the quarter-pole is. Just another character." The agent jumped up and ran to the counter, trying to get his boy a mount on one of the horses that still were open:

"Put Loose Horse Lynch on Powder Puff," he shouted.

McClosky watched the Professor. McClosky, a large man who looked as if he were made of scrap iron and leather—and those that had tangled with him were convinced of it—was a detective. His job, pure and simple, was keeping his small black eyes open for any shady practices that would violate the rules of racing. The Professor looked, to him, like a man who might bear watching, though McClosky wasn't sure in his own mind what aroused his suspicions unless it was the fact that the Professor seemed so out of place.

He reared his muscular hulk off the bench and went over to the Professor.

"Have you a match?" he said.

The Professor fumbled through all his pockets and finally found one. McClosky lit his cigar and said:

"I hear you bought Rusticon."

"Why, yes, I did," the Professor answered. "I have great hopes for the horse. You see, he's been misunderstood."

McClosky snorted: "Been misunder—what?"

"Misunderstood," the Professor continued. "It's remarkable how the science of understanding animals has been neglected. Hundreds of years ago some people lived on what they caught with trained falcons. Think of the undiscovered secrets of animals' systems of conveying thought. Now in outer Mongolia there is a primitive tribe that has passed down from generation to generation the ability to—"

"Just a minute," McClosky interrupted. "You never had a trainer's license before, did you?"

"Why, no, I haven't."

"Well, one thing is this: I don't know what has been the big difference between animal training years ago and now, but I do know that the rules of racing are very up to date. Just pay strict attention to them," McClosky said, fixing the Professor with an icy stare. The Professor returned the gaze a moment, and then, seeming to see something in the distance, smiled absent-mindedly and walked off. McClosky watched the man and shook his head. *There's some rare ones around this track,* he thought. . . .

Four days later McClosky saw Rusticon's name among the entries. He'd forgotten about the Professor, but now he remembered the scholarly-looking man and his outlaw horse. At one time Rusticon had showed a lot of speed. Then he'd turned sour. He'd bolt going to the post. He was mean in the gate. In general he was the kind that made trainers old before their time. In the morning he'd do anything, but in the afternoon it was a battle from the time they tried to saddle him in the paddock to the time that the race was over. McClosky thought that this afternoon would probably be the Professor's sole appearance as a trainer.

McClosky made a mental note to be in the paddock before the third—the race Rusticon was in.

THAT afternoon, when McClosky got to the paddock, he noticed a small gathering in front of the stall where Rusticon was being saddled. *The horse is up to his old tricks,* he thought. Pushing his way through the watching people, McClosky saw that Rusticon was standing quietly. People whispered to one another because they were so used to seeing a rodeo every time someone put the tack on the brute. They couldn't believe their eyes. Rusticon was standing as quietly as an old milch cow. He was a good-looking horse, and even though he had a small suspicious eye, he couldn't have been quieter today.

McClosky immediately became suspicious. This old coot in the linen suit must be using something on the horse, some kind of sedative.

IN some ways, McClosky's mind worked like his body, slowly, ponderously, but methodically. As the horses went to the post, McClosky thoughtfully tabulated what little he knew about the Professor. He tried, with his limited imagination, to guess what the Professor might be trying to pull. Glancing at the board, he could see that Rusticon's approximate odds were 80 to 1, and well they might be. Quickly checking the horse's past performances in the *Racing Form,* McClosky saw that his last races were commented upon like an unsuccessful cavalry charge: "Left at the post," "bolted on the turn," "sulked in the final stages." Yet his morning workouts showed the horse had a lot of speed. Now through his field glasses McClosky watched Rusticon going to the post. The horse was on his toes, but perfectly quiet. The Professor was riding a green apprentice named Manuel Garcia. The boy appeared to be sitting on the horse as if he were riding down the lane to get the mail. McClosky couldn't understand it.

Rusticon stood quietly in the starting gates. Then slowly he seemed to lower his hind end. When the starter let them go Rusticon came out of the gates like a scared rabbit. He hit the turn four lengths on top. Then, for a sixteenth of a mile, he seemed to check himself. At the head of the stretch he pulled out in the middle of the track and won by seven lengths. Manuel Garcia was all curled up like a snail, trying to look well for the photographers, and McClosky was sure the little Mexican didn't have the slightest idea where he was going. The horse seemed to pull up after the race of his own accord. He automatically lined up on the outside rail at right angles to the track, stood for a second, breathed deeply and turned and cantered back to the judges' stand. Then McClosky noticed something very strange. Although Garcia had a rein in each hand, he also had a handful of mane. His whip was hanging on the outside of his right wrist by an elastic band. The reins were hanging loose. He was leaving the horse completely alone. McClosky thought he must be dreaming. Rusticon slowed up to a trot, and, completely unguided by the jock, threaded his way through the horses that had already returned to the judges' stand and walked into the winner's circle. The perspiration between McClosky's shoulder blades

Illustrated by
FREDERICK CHAPMAN

"Well, whatever you're doing, and I fully intend to find out, 'tis payin' off," said McClosky.

suddenly chilled. He felt goose pimples in the hair on the back of his neck. There was something very strange going on.

He watched the cameramen take pictures of Rusticon with Garcia, on his first winner, wearing the silliest grin McClosky had ever seen. Then McClosky shook himself and irritably threaded his way down to the winner's circle. As the Professor held the horse and Garcia was taking his saddle off, McClosky pushed his way up to him and said,

"I've a few questions I'd like to be askin' you."

The Professor smiled at him. "Oh, good afternoon. I'll be delighted to answer any questions I can, but I must attend to this horse."

"Let your swipe take him."

"I'm afraid I'm doing my own swiping," the Professor answered, laughing nervously at his own attempt at humor.

"Well, whatever you're doing, and I fully intend to find out, 'tis payin' off in China," McClosky said as he glanced at the board and saw that the winner, Rusticon, paid a hundred and seventy-two dollars to win.

The Professor followed his gaze.

"My, my!" he said. "That makes me fairly wealthy."

The Professor led Rusticon out of the winner's circle and his white linen suit and Panama hat stood out amongst the other stable boys as the horses strung out, single file, on the way back to the stables. McClosky watched the dignified figure walking alongside his horse and slowly shook his head. Thirty years a detective around the track, but McClosky had never seen anything quite like the Professor.

The next day the big Irish detective set the ground-work for a typical McClosky campaign. Three of his operatives were posing as stable men employed in the area where the Professor was quartered. The information came in promptly; all of it proving nothing. The Professor lived in his tack-room. He sat on a feed tub most of the day and read books. He had no help working for him at all. Yesterday, after the race, he'd cooled the horse out himself; walking him around and around the shed. Nothing had happened out of the ordinary except once, when the Professor had stopped the horse near the tack-room door and had gone inside the room to get some liniment. He'd just thrown the halter shank over the horse's back and left him standing there. Evidently the old crank didn't know horses sometimes run away or he wouldn't have taken a chance like that. He'd fed Rusticon and the track pony, done up the stalls for the night, and returned to the stands to watch the last race.

McClosky went over the rest of the information he'd been able to pick up. He'd talked to Garcia when the little Mexican left the jocks' room. Garcia was so excited McClosky had to wait for him to run out of steam in Spanish and then answer a few questions in English.

"No, the horse I have never galloped or even seen before. The instructions from the *patrón*? I am sorry, señor, I have given the word not to repeat."

McClosky had flashed his badge, at this, and said,

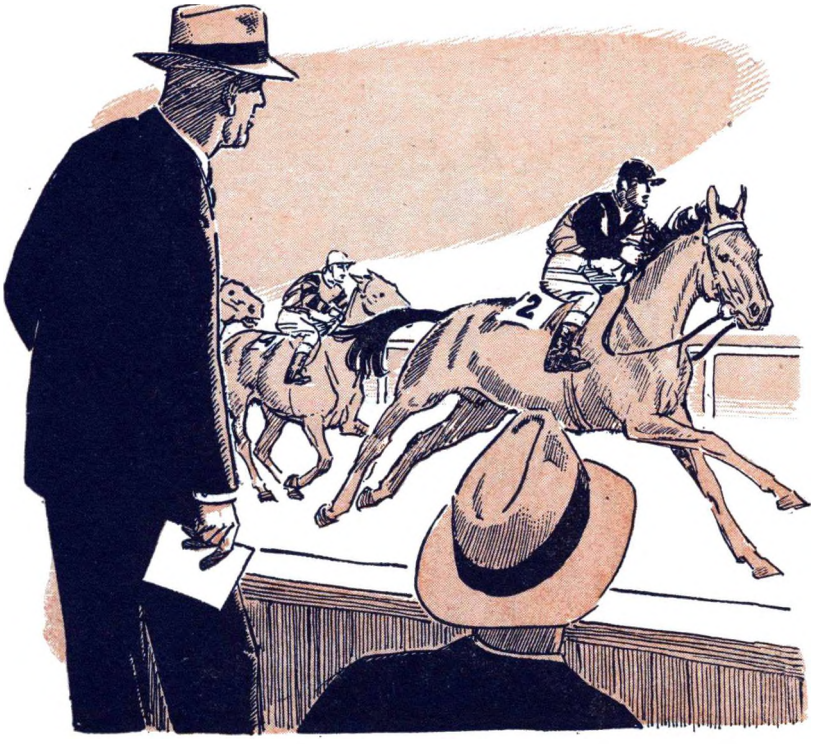
"Look, Garcia. I want to know what the Professor told you when he threw you up on that horse, and I want to know in a hurry."

Manuel had looked at the badge for a long moment, and then smiled.

"Señor, it will be hard to explain. You see the Professor speaks the fluent-drive Spanish. To translate close may be hard. You are going to get angry with me, but this is what the Professor says: 'Manuel, here is a coin for each hand. Keep the hands around the hair of the mane and the coins. Bring the coins back to me. If you are trying to guide the horse, rate the horse, or in any way touch the horse's mouth, you will drop the coins. No coins, when you come back, no more rides. Leave the horse alone and you will win it by a city square.'"

McClosky remembered that he had shouted: "What? Are you trying to kid me? Why would you ride to screwy orders like that?"

Garcia had answered him: "Señor, not since I have left my grandfather in Brownsville, Texas, have I seen anyone with the animals like the Professor. He is a very great trainer.



It wasn't even a horse race. Uncas finished five lengths in front.

And what is more, I am anxious for another ride."

McClosky's next move was to ask the track veterinarian if it were possible to give the horse enough sedatives to make him behave. The answer had been, "Yes, but the horse would have dropped off to sleep in the starting gate. And why ask about that now? You know we made the usual tests, saliva and urinalysis, after the race yesterday. We'd have told you if anything had showed up."

McClosky grunted. "Yeah, I know I just wanted to ask."

Now McClosky was mad. He was an intense man who lived solely for his job. He loved horses and, in his plodding way, he loved honesty. Anyone getting away with anything around the race-track was doing a personal injury to McClosky; it was a personal slap at McClosky's intelligence and ability. He couldn't help it but he was beginning to hate the Professor. In twenty-four hours the Professor—at least in McClosky's mind—had made a complete fool of him.

McClosky pushed his hat over his eyes and left his office. As he went through the front room of the building, the usual eleven-o'clock scramble was going on. McClosky left the office, climbed into his car and drove around to the Professor's barn.

The Professor was sitting on an overturned tub reading a large leather-bound volume. As McClosky walked over he raised his kindly eyes from the book and smiled.

"Good morning. Lovely day, is it not?"

McClosky uncivilly grunted assent. Clearing his throat, he blurted:

"Look, me boy, let's not beat around the bush. You've pulled off quite a killing. I've found out 'tis close to eleven thousand dollars. 'Tis my job to see that there is nothing funny going on around here that might induce the bettin' public's money into the wrong hands. How come that horse suddenly became so easy to handle?"

The Professor slowly put the book down and McClosky could see, from the title, that it was an old-fashioned veterinarian's book. The Professor stood up and stretched.

"Come into the tack-room and sit down," he said politely.

After they were seated, the Professor said:

"You know, Mr.—"

"McClosky," the detective grunted.

"Oh, by the way, my name's Grimson. Hugh Grimson. As I was saying, Mr. McClosky, the first time we met, the whole art of animal training has been neglected, and I have felt that—"

"Look, you steered me off the track with that last week," McClosky interrupted. "I looked up that stuff you were giving me about falcons. I found pictures of some jocks riding in cast-iron B.V.D.'s with a hawk on their arm, and I couldn't find anything about the rules of racing in Mongolia, but that's got nothing to do with running horses way off form."

"Mr. McClosky, if you'll just allow me to tell you and not butt in, I'll try and explain." There was a slight edge to the Professor's voice; as though he were lecturing a naughty child. He continued:

"I have spent many years trying to understand animals. I find that nature has endowed them with many phenomenal attributes. Certainly they can communicate amongst themselves. Some say that horse has nothing but a memory. But I have found that he is not stupid. He is basically equipped, mentally, very well. It seemed to me that—"

Again McClosky interrupted: "I know horses pretty well, but what I'm driving at is what did you do to Rusticon to make him act so quiet?"

The Professor got up from his chair. "I did nothing to him, and I resent the continuous implication that I have. You reject my explanation by rude interruptions. Let us change the subject."

McClosky got mad.

"We're not changin' any subjects. I hear you bought that rogue Uncas. Well, he's on the starter's list. You can't even enter that horse until you take him to the gate in the morning and get the starter's permission. He broke a jock's leg."

"Yes, Mr. McClosky, I bought the horse. I have arranged to take him to the starting gate in the morning. I fully expect to start him as soon as I can find a suitable race."

"You'll start him when the starter says so and not before," McClosky shouted.

The Professor looked at McClosky without saying a word. His thoughts seemed to be miles away. McClosky started for his car. Anger almost choked him. He felt like a fool. He got in and drove off.

The next morning McClosky waited at the starting gate for the Professor. He'd found out all he could from the crew of assistant starters about Uncas; the horse was mean, completely uncontrollable, and the starter had finally given up and put him on the list which prevented his running until he'd been properly schooled. He was a good horse with a lot of speed and he could stay all day, but he took so much out of himself, fighting in the starting gates, that he'd run three very dismal races his last times out. McClosky was playing blackjack with the starting crew when one of them said:

"Here comes His Lordship now."

Looking down the track, McClosky saw the Professor sitting as straight as a ramrod on the track pony. Following him, like a dog, was Uncas with Garcia, all grins, on Uncas' back.

They came to the gates quietly and one of the assistants started toward the horse to lead him in.

"Please," the Professor said, "let the horse go in of his own accord."

The assistant looked at the starter questioningly.

The starter nodded and agreed. "O.K. If he wants to kill that vacuum-headed *vaquero,* it's O.K. by me."

The Professor looked at the horse and made a curious noise. Uncas walked into the stall and stood still. The starting crew looked at one another as though they'd all seen a ghost. The Professor kept making funny noises as if imitating a girl's high giggle. Uncas, with Garcia sitting as if on a child's Shetland pony, scratched one ear against the side of the gate.

"Try opening the gates slow," the starter said.

ONE of the assistants slowly opened the gates as though he expected a bomb to go off. Uncas just stood there.

The starter said: "Well, I'll be damned!"

McClosky picked up a manila envelope and took out some photographs. First he'd study the pictures and then check the horse.

"The horse's upper lip is tattooed, you know," the Professor said quietly.

McClosky walked around to the horse's head and then stopped. You could see he was afraid of Uncas. The Professor made a noise. Then—and later the story swept the track like wildfire—Uncas lifted his head high and curled up his upper lip. The purple tattoo numbers that the Thoroughbred Identification Association had printed there indelibly—to identify the horse—were plain to see. The big detective stared. Some of the crew laughed, and a slow flush spread over McClosky's face.

The starter said: "O.K. We'll let him out of there. Close the gate. Hang on, Pancho."

When the starter saw the horse was standing squarely, he pushed the button in his hand that rang the bell and made the little individual gates of each stall fly open. Uncas broke like an express and ran straight as an arrow down the track.

"Okey dokey, Pops," the starter said. "Run him any time you want. They don't act any better than that ever." The starter climbed down from his little stand and went back to the card game. McClosky didn't say a word. He turned on his heel and cut across the infield to his office.

Walking with his head down, McClosky was boiling mad. The horse, lifting his lip the way he did, made him feel sillier than ever. The fact that he'd taken the identification papers out didn't make him feel any better. The Professor was making him ridiculous. When he got to his office he sat behind his desk and listened to the noise outside. His mind was going around in circles. The Professor couldn't have beaten either one of these two horses into submission. There weren't any marks on them, and they seemed relaxed and happy. They'd even prick up their ears when they heard the Professor making that idiotic noise like a girl giggling. He was amazed at his own temper. The Professor was a nice kind of a guy, even if he was a little queer.

Outside his office, McClosky could hear them calling the morning line for tomorrow's races. They'd name a horse, then a jockey, then the post position. Whenever they'd say "no boy" the agents would start a general chatter trying to get the mount for their boy. Suddenly McClosky heard:

"Uncas—Garcia up. In Number Three." Well, the Professor must have rushed right over and entered the horse, because the only time he'd have had was while McClosky walked across the infield.

McClosky got up and went to the man who was calling the names.

"When was that horse entered?" he asked.

"Oh, about ten. An hour ago."

"Didn't you fellows know he was on the starter's list?"

"Sure we did, but the old fellow said the horse would be off the list by eleven. He must have had him schooled real early. The starter just now O.K.'d him. Why?"

"Nothing," McClosky answered as he turned around and went back into his office. He felt irrational; something weird was happening; something akin to the supernatural. Here was a man buying a horse that was so bad at the gate that they wouldn't let him run. Yet he had so much confidence in himself that he'd enter the horse before he'd got him off the starter's list. McClosky had seen all the great trainers of the last three decades, but nothing like the Professor. McClosky was scared. Here was the same thing again as Rusticon; the papers wouldn't give Uncas a chance. If he ran a race like Rusticon, McClosky might well have trouble explaining to the stewards about the Professor. You can't just say a man knows more than anybody else. Not a man who had to take his trainer's examination three times because he couldn't remember the scale of weights and hadn't the foggiest notion of proper claiming procedures. No, McClosky was scared.

Just then the door opened and the Professor walked in. McClosky sat behind his desk with a stupid look on his face and just stared at the man.

"Mr. McClosky," the Professor began, "I want you to stop spying on me. I am not any too sure that it isn't within my legal rights to sue you for invasion of privacy. Frankly, I am a little hazy about the intricate regulations of racing, but for you to insinuate, by your actions, that I was using a—a 'ringer,' I believe you call it, by producing some horse other than Uncas in order to get permission for Uncas to start, was preposterous. I shall have to ask you to stop. And call off those big-footed amateur sleuths you have posing as stable boys. Besides, they can't use a rake. They leave the area a mess."

With that the Professor was about to leave the office when McClosky stopped him, saying:

"Just a minute, Grimson, I'd like to ask you one question."

"Yes, Mr. McClosky?" the Professor answered, emphazing the *Mister.*

"How come you entered that Uncas for tomorrow before you ever knew he'd break out o' the gates?"

"I suppose I was a bit confident, but you see. . . . What's the use? I have tried to explain. I am sure you wouldn't believe me. I respect your position. I understand how very important it is to keep the undesirable element out of racing and protect the public, but I condemn your infernal interference. Good morning."

The Professor turned and left the office. McClosky sat there like a man bemused. He felt very foolish.

The next morning McClosky was reading the *Racing Form.* A small statement, in a box, caught his eye:

> H. Grimson, the trainer of Uncas, has asked that the public be warned of the good condition of his horse, Uncas. The conditioner, a newcomer to the turf, says the horse should win handily in the company he is entered with. As this is the first time this paper has ever had a statement like this, we print it.

WHEN McClosky got to the office the place was in an uproar. There were several photographers from different papers all yelling at once: Where was Grimson stabled; what made him think the horse could win; what was this anyway, the track giving their own tips? McClosky was furious. This was it. The old fake in the linen suit wasn't going to make a complete fool of him. Then he thought, perhaps the man does want to egg me on—get me mad enough to do something and then sue me and

the track for big dough. Well, he'd have to wait. Perhaps Uncas wouldn't repeat like Rusticon. Perhaps the vacuum-headed *vaquero* would fall off. By the Saints, 'twas impossible a man should have to stand all this abuse! McClosky felt he was coming to the end of his rope.

That afternoon McClosky climbed wearily into the stands. All the way through the crowd he heard "Uncas this," "Uncas that." He watched the odds board. Everyone bet the horse. Uncas was better than even money. When a horse is better than even money McClosky knew the track had to pay ten cents on every dollar out of its own pocket. The crowd bet Uncas as a joke; they were all laughing and whooping. When Uncas walked onto the track—second in the parade—a roar went up as though they were greeting the winner of the Kentucky Derby. Manuel Garcia just sat there with—so McClosky noticed—two full handfuls of mane. He was grinning from ear to ear and nodding his head in personal answer to the crowd's roar. McClosky stubbed his toe and cursed. He felt awful. Never in his life had he yearned so fervently to see a horse beaten.

Uncas went to the post just as Rusticon had—ears pricked and staying right in line. He reminded McClosky of some circus horse, he was that well behaved. McClosky looked at the odds board again. The worst thing was, there was no money being bet on the race save the money bet on Uncas. The crowd was taking it as a joke and yet they were all afraid to bet against the horse. Well, McClosky thought, you'd hate to be beat by a horse when the trainer warned you in the morning paper!

The horses filed into the gate. McClosky watched through his glass. Uncas stood like a statue. McClosky wished he'd rear up and fall over backward—which he'd seen him do—but the horse just stood and waited. The bell rang and they were off. It wasn't even a horse race. Secretly McClosky wasn't surprised. He knew the horse could run. Uncas finished five lengths in front, just breezing. Garcia was smiling up at the stands and hanging onto the horse's mane for dear life. The Professor was making a joke out of the track in general and McClosky in particular. The noise of the crowd swelled to a rumbling roar that was louder than any McClosky had ever heard. They loved it. It was something new. Something that was making them all glad they were there; anxious to get back home and add their own embroidery to the story of what had happened. It was like seeing some baseball player make history. When the horse came back to the winner's circle the inevitable autograph hounds became so bold they climbed the rail and poured around Manuel and the Professor. McClosky turned and went to his office. He felt shaky and a little ill.

After that the newspapers drove McClosky—and, for that matter, the Professor—crazy. The public loved the Professor; his accent, his linen suit, his floppy hat. He had color. He was a definite reversal of the usual type of trainer. The crowd ate it up. He ran Rusticon and Uncas again. They both won. And he would tell everyone and anyone how he thought the horses would run. The track lost money on the races. The crowd wouldn't bet much on his horses—the odds were so poor—but they wouldn't bet against them.

The stewards ran McClosky ragged. They wanted to know what was going on and yet they respected the Professor. Other trainers wanted the Professor to take their bad actors and train them. The Professor declined; he said that he wanted to keep his stable small and do all his own work. Anytime there was a horse that was hard to load into a van or the vets couldn't find what made it lame, the Professor was called. Oblivious to those around him, he'd make those silly noises and get any horse to walk into a van like a lamb; or he would fool around for a few minutes and tell someone exactly what was wrong with his horse and what was hurting it. Soon all the vets were after McClosky too. What was he doing? Trying to let this character run them out of business?

Only one thing kept McClosky from doing bodily harm to the Professor: the Professor was very kind to horses. McClosky respected this. In fact, it was his love of horses that first made McClosky take this job. Once a trainer was caught shooting a horse with a shotgun, loaded with rock salt, to make it break quickly from the stall gates. McClosky almost beat the man

SPORT SPURTS

Arthur Cook, University of Maryland's Olympic rifle champion, never shot a live animal and says he doesn't intend to try.

* * *

Young Stribling, who scored 127 knockouts, engaged in fifty-five fights in one year, more than one a week.

* * *

The smallest number of starters to go to the post in the Kentucky Derby was three, which happened three different times: 1892, 1899 and 1905.

* * *

When an expected overflow crowd attended a Chattanooga ball game, Joe Engel, manager of the club, saw to it that none of the customers in the field would be hit. He froze the balls so they would not travel too far out—a trick invented by John McGraw.

* * *

Joe Louis knocked out five men in the first round in the defense of his heavyweight title: Schmeling, John Henry Lewis, Roper (these three were in a row), Buddy Baer and Tami Mauriello.

* * *

Jim Bottomley, the St. Louis Cardinal first baseman, knocked in twelve runs in one game against Brooklyn in 1924—a record that still stands.

Golf is the only major game which requires no form of defensive play.

* * *

Pugilists Sam Langford and Sam McVey fought each other fifteen times—Langford won five, McVey one; five were no decisions and four were draws.

* * *

Grover Cleveland Alexander pitched sixteen shutout games for the Philadelphia Phillies in 1916.

* * *

Frank (Pinky) Higgins holds the major-league record for hits in succession—twelve, made in 1938.

* * *

In 1937 in Los Angeles, Mel Hansen, midget-auto racer, turned completely over with his car but landed right-side-up without losing his position, and finished in third place.

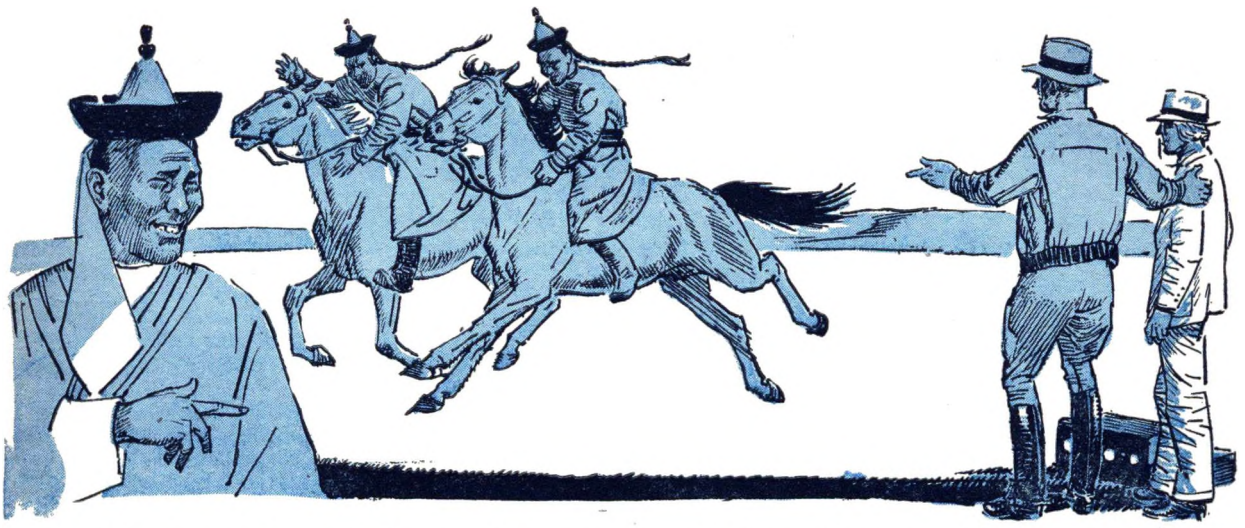
* * *

Alabama beat Texas A. & M. 29-to-21 in the 1942 Cotton Bowl, although Alabama made only one first down against 13 and gained only 76 yards to 309.

* * *

The Cleveland Browns made exactly the same number of yards rushing during the 1948 All-American Conference season that they did in 1947—namely, 2557.

—by Harold Helfer



"That beast on the outside shows speed. Do you suppose there's any place a man might place a small bet?"

to a pulp and then had him set down for ten years. McClosky personally tore the trainer's license into little pieces.

One morning McClosky was having coffee in the Frenchman's Kitchen. He felt awful. He was having trouble sleeping and then—when he would doze off fitfully he'd dream about the Professor. Sitting there, moodily staring into his cup, he suddenly realized what he was going to have to do; plead with the Professor to stop doing whatever he was doing to the horses. If he could only get the crowd to forget the Professor, McClosky wouldn't feel like such a fool.

Slowly McClosky got off the stool and left; heading for the Professor's barn, his mind made up and admitting defeat to himself. His head was bent and he seemed intent on the ground directly in front of him. When anyone would hail him a "Hi, Mac," he'd only grunt in response.

As he drew near the Professor's barn he felt worse. Thirty years in the game and McClosky was licked. He knew it.

The Professor was cleaning out the track-pony's stall. He had on a large pair of coveralls and the inevitable Panama hat.

"Good morning, Mr. McClosky. I want to apologize for being a bit brisk the other morning."

"Forget it," McClosky rumbled.

Then there was an awkward silence. Suddenly McClosky started to talk with a rush. The words came tumbling as though he had only seconds to finish his speech.

"Whatever you're doing to these horses, cut it out. Let 'em run natural. Let 'em alone."

"Why?" the Professor asked.

"Why!" McClosky shouted. "Why, because you're making a fool out of me. Everyone's laughin' their heads off at me."

A bit absent-mindedly the Professor scratched the head of the track pony. The stall door was open and the pony stood with his eyes half shut, relaxing in the morning sunlight.

Then the Professor answered. His voice was low and friendly.

"Mr. McClosky, you don't really mean that. If what I do to horses—to use your own words—is within the rules of racing—you're asking me to throw a race, actually to restrain a horse! I believe in American slang you'd call it 'stage a boat race.'"

McClosky looked as if he'd been punched in the stomach. What the Professor said was true. He just stood there staring at the man, feeling more helpless than ever.

The Professor went on, his voice more gentle; almost as though he felt sorry for McClosky.

"I do have an unfair advantage. I might quit racing. I've made enough money to continue my research."

"What research?" McClosky blurted.

"Why, research in communication amongst animals. Not to change the subject, I might go to work for you, Mr. Mc—I mean Mac. Yours is a worthy position, especially from a horse's standpoint."

McClosky slowly saw the truth. He took his hat off and mopped his brow. Then as the full impact of what the Professor said struck him, he let his hat drop from his fingers and just stared at the Professor. The hat, unnoticed by McClosky, rolled in front of the pony's stall.

"I don't believe you," he said.

The Professor looked off into the distance. Around the corners of his gentle mouth a smile got out of control.

"Oh, yes, it's quite true. I tried to tell you," the Professor said almost apologetically.

McClosky started to reach down and pick up his hat. The Professor gently put a restraining hand on McClosky's arm. Then he made a noise, a cross between a giggle and clearing his throat. The pony's eyes opened; he looked at the Professor, then reaching down he picked up the hat in his teeth and handed it to McClosky.

Four Mongolian tribesmen were busy breaking horses in a makeshift corral. They were making peculiar noises and the shaggy little horses seemed as tame and quiet as dogs. The corral—made from gnarled timberline branches and rawhide rope—was above a village of dome-like yurts.

From one of these round shelters two white men emerged. The larger one was carrying a heavy recording machine and some batteries. As they walked toward the corral they both seemed to be having trouble getting their breath in the high mountain air.

As they drew near the corral, two of the tribesmen mounted their horses bareback and, leaving the corral, staged an impromptu race across the rock-strewn hillside. The larger man set his burden down and watched them as they ran head-and-head across the rough ground. He let his hand rest, for a moment, on the shoulder of the smaller man.

Then McClosky turned to the Professor and smiled.

"That woolly beast on the outside shows a little speed. Do you suppose there's any place in town where a man might spark this research by placing a small bet?"

It Happened in

The master of the little tug *Colossus* achieves a rescue and turns a neat trick in business.

BIFF HAYDEN, president of the Hayden Towing Company, wiped the last of the paint from his hands, stepped up on the stringpiece and gazed not unfondly on his sole assets rubbing gently against the Gowanus pier, a tiny squat blue-and-white tug that someone with a perverted sense of humor had originally christened *Colossus.*

"For an old lady," Biff murmured, "she doesn't look bad. Eh, Sweeney?"

"A little paint does wonders," admitted the grizzled deckhand standing on the stringpiece beside Biff. "But I think we'd better be gettin' over to the 101 before—"

"Sweeney, today the world is my oyster. This is only the beginning. Once the *Colossus* is paid off, I'm going to keep an eye peeled for a bigger job, maybe a Diesel." Biff poked the older man playfully in the ribs. "Some day you'll be sitting in an office over at the Battery with your name on the door: *T. Sweeney, Superintendent of Hayden Towing.* Sound good?"

Sweeney, a man hewed into a realist by sixty none too fruitful years, cocked a skeptical eye at Biff. He turned his head to leeward and neatly spat a stream of tobacco juice into the Gowanus, a canal where fluid equally unlovely rose and fell with the tide.

"If we don't pick up the 101 and get it started to the basin," he observed, "Kissen might be decidin' he needs a faster boat on that run."

This possibility, an alarming one, was enough to bring Biff back to matters on hand. He helped Sweeney gather up paint cans and brushes, and they boarded their small craft. In a few moments she was gliding down the canal with Biff behind the wheel, a young man of lean physique and sunburned complexion who on counting his blessings found them many.

Three days before, with the help of a sympathetic official at Commercial Credit, he had closed the deal for the *Colossus,* thus realizing that wondrous day of becoming master of his own vessel. Twenty-four hours later more good fortune was his. He had contacted J. B. Kissen, who was adding the Mill Basin Coaling Terminal and its one barge to his many interests; and when Biff pointed out to Kissen that a small boat like the *Colossus,* running under light expense, might handle the basin run cheaper than the heavier tugs, Kissen had agreed to a trial. Kissen, of course, true to his close-fisted ways, had named a figure barely covering expenses, but Biff did not haggle. A daily tow would provide him with a measure of security until he obtained other contracts. It meant he was in business to stay, Biff happily reflected, as he throttled his engines and rounded into the Ninth Street slip.

"We'll take it alongside as far as the Narrows," he instructed Sweeney as they approached the 101, a coal barge boasting a cabin on its stern.

Sweeney nodded, accepted the eye of a hawser from the barge hand who had come hurrying from the cabin, and he made it fast on the forward bitt. How—Biff never knew, for he was watching Sweeney—the barge hand had managed to drop a good thirty feet of the heavy line over the side was a mystery. But he had, and he was struggling to haul it back on the barge, a slow and painful process for it was now slippery with oil dregs from the canal.

CURIOUSLY Biff looked across at the barge hand who, despite the mild April day, was wearing a heavy blue reefer, many sizes too large, and a woolen cap jammed down around his ears.

"Where's Scotty today?" Biff asked, referring to Scotty Ferguson, the aged barge captain who for close to thirty years was a familiar figure on the 101.

"Sick!" The barge hand gritted this information out as he laboriously hauled in several more feet of the line.

Someone with a perverted sense of humor had christened it **Colossus.**

Gowanus

by CALVIN CLEMENTS

Sweeney, hewed into a realist by sixty none too fruitful years, cocked a skeptical eye.

"Take your coat off," Biff suggested, "and maybe you'd get somewhere with that line!"

The barge hand muttered something undistinguishable and continued heaving on the heavy line, losing several feet of it when he paused to wipe oily hands across his trousers.

Biff shook his head. "Listen, pal, we'll be here all day at this rate. I'll back down a bit, and you take it in as I come ahead."

Either the barge hand did not hear, or else he was ignorant of what was to take place, for as Biff backed the tug off, he continued to heave on the hawser and was totally unprepared for the line lifting from the water and the sudden strain. On one side was the tug, on the other was the barge hand, his eyes closed, teeth clenched with effort, still pulling. It was a contest unequal, the results inevitable. Squealing in a very unseamanlike fashion the barge hand tottered to the edge of the barge, released the line too late and tumbled over the side into the canal.

"I've seen some bonehead plays," Biff offered, when the barge hand came sputtering to the surface, "but you take the—"

Biff broke off and stared down at what he had assumed to be a young man but who, now hatless, obviously was a young woman with close-cropped yellow hair and the angriest blue eyes that Biff had seen in a long time.

"You darn fool!" gasped the girl. "Why didn't you tell me what you were doing?"

"I did," Biff said, slightly dazed at the sight of a pretty girl treading water in the Gowanus Canal.

"Well don't just stand there with your mouth open! Come down here and get me out!"

Biff hurried to the lower deck, bypassed Sweeney who was scratching his chin as if he still didn't believe it, leaped across to the barge and extended his hand to the girl. In a moment she was hoisted to the deck, wet, shivering and still glaring.

"If I can be of any help—" Biff offered, following the girl into the barge cabin.

"You can pull that darn old rope out of the water!" She disappeared behind the partition dividing the cabin.

"Sweeney will handle that," Biff said. "Listen, I'm sorry about the ducking. I—"

"Oh, it wasn't your fault. . . ." The girl's muffled voice was somewhat modified from behind the partition. "Anyway, I'm just upset because of that stinker Kissen."

"He upsets many people," Biff admitted. "What's he done now?"

"He's trying to get rid of Scotty. As soon as he bought up the company he began snooping on the old-timers due to retire, and last night he came down here and told Scotty he wouldn't stand for any more of his drinking—knowing full well it's Scotty's rheumatism that puts him in bed every spring. He said the first day he caught Scotty off the job he'd fire him. And sure enough Scotty woke up this morning scarcely able to sit up."

"And you're taking his place," Biff said. "Listen, that's the screwiest thing I ever heard of. Why didn't Scotty hire a man instead of a girl?"

The splash of water indicated a vigorous scrubbing was taking place behind the partition. Biff sat down on the edge of a lumpy bed. The cabin flooring was covered with much-worn linoleum; a battered Morris chair and an old-fashioned pot-bellied stove completed the furnishings of the room. A barge captain's life was not one of luxury, and Biff's sympathies went out to the old man who was outliving his usefulness.

"He didn't hire me," the girl said finally. "I'm Agnes, his niece. And this isn't his idea. It's mine. I thought it might be fun. I know better now, but if Kissen keeps his nose off the barge until Scotty returns everything will be all right."

"You can't help but run into trouble handling the heavier lines," Biff said, after a moment's thought, "but I guess we might work it out between us. Sweeney won't mind taking care of this end—" Biff blinked.

The small blonde girl who emerged from behind the partition modestly lowered her eyes and self-consciously smoothed a wrinkle from the pale-blue lounging pajamas she wore.

"Some coal-dust spotted my blouse when I came aboard this morning," she confessed. "I washed it, and it hasn't quite dried yet. These are the only things I brought with me."

Biff cleared his throat. "No apologies needed. You look fine." *An understatement if there ever was one,* he thought. He rose from the bed and drew a handkerchief from his pocket. "You missed a spot on your chin. That canal water is pretty grimy."

"Take your coat off," Biff suggested, "and maybe you'd get somewhere!"

Biff advanced, and Agnes obediently lifted her small oval face, closing her eyes as he gently rubbed off the offending blemish. With her wide generous mouth parted slightly, her posture was so provokingly feminine that Biff with only great difficulty refrained from making a fool of himself. The elusive scent of jasmine did not help matters.

"And on my property, too!" exclaimed a nasal voice from the doorway.

Mr. J. B. Kissen was a little man with small suspicious eyes darting behind thick-lensed glasses. At the moment his eyes were darting over Agnes' elegant if injudicious attire. His wrinkled mouth tightened.

"Just who are you, young lady? And where is Ferguson?"

Agnes glanced appealingly at Biff, but before he could speak she took the plunge. "I'm Mr. Ferguson's niece, Mr. Kissen. He's sick and I—I'm—"

"Sick!" Mr. Kissen pounced on the word. "Hah, sick, indeed! You mean recovering from a hangover. Well we stand for no such nonsense here. He needn't call for his check. We'll send it!"

Agnes made a helpless gesture with one hand. "Mr. Kissen, he really *is* sick. You can visit him and see for yourself. If you wish he can obtain a certificate from a doctor—"

"Doctors!" snorted Mr. Kissen. "You mean fakers! They'll get nowhere trying to flimflam me. I know those quacks. They'll sign anything for a four-dollar fee!"

Biff thought he saw a glimmer of moisture in Agnes' pretty eyes. He was rapidly becoming annoyed with Mr. Kissen.

"Mr. Kissen, Scotty's not a young man any more," Biff said, stepping forward, "and after so many years of faithful service he deserves a little consideration. After all, in a year or so he'll be entitled to a pension, and it wouldn't be fair to let him go now."

"EH! What's that?" Mr. Kissen turned on Biff and peered over his glasses. *"Entitled* to a pension, did you say? When he can't perform his duties properly? Young man, I'm a business man, not a philanthropist! And speaking of pensions, I know of no more evil racket fostered on American business men today than these handouts classified as pensions. A hard-working man who puts a dollar aside needs no—" Mr. Kissen peered closely at Biff. "Oh, it's you! Young man, why isn't this barge on its way to the basin? You should have been under way an hour ago instead of"—his eyes flicked over to Agnes—"instead of dillydallying around with a—a—"

Biff bristled. "A what?" He advanced on Mr. Kissen, his sense of chivalry more than a little disturbed. Mr. Kissen retreated to the door in alarm.

"Please," Agnes said, reaching for Biff's arm. "You mustn't get into trouble on my account."

"A sensible warning," Mr. Kissen declared, nervously adjusting his glasses. "And, young man, I'm giving you just three hours to tow this barge to the basin. If I don't see it there at one o'clock, I'll assume that so-called tugboat of yours is not capable of doing the job." With that Mr. Kissen turned and scurried out the door.

"What a horrid man!" Agnes said. She fumbled for a handkerchief. "Don't mind me. I'm a bubble baby."

Biff awkwardly patted her shoulder. "Now, now, none of that. . . . Look here, I've got to get started to the basin. Why don't you come along and speak to Kissen again? Perhaps he'll be in a better mood when he's had his lunch."

"I doubt he has a better mood," Agnes vigorously blew her nose.

"You have nothing to lose by trying," Biff argued. "Kissen's a hard-headed man when it comes to business deals but, strange as it seems, he occasionally acts human. Catch him after his milk and crackers and he might be feeling more kindly toward Scotty."

ORANGE sunlight glinted on the Jamaica waters. Gulls wheeled and chattered above the *Colossus* as she crept up the narrow channel toward Mill Basin. In the pilothouse Biff lounged against the wheel, one eye on the traffic ahead, the other on Agnes standing at the open window. A soft breeze was ruffling her blonde hair. She had changed to a silk blouse open at the throat, and a flaring gray skirt; a trim and tidy craft, Biff reflected. During the three hours under way from the Gowanus he had learned she was employed as a law stenographer for the maritime firm of Schuman and Bates, had reached her twenty-first birthday, detested her first name, and was unmarried—the latter item rapidly gaining in importance with Biff.

"I assume that's the Kissen lair I've heard so much about," Agnes said, pointing ahead.

"And right on time," Biff nodded. "Kissen'll have little complaint about the service."

Under reduced speed they shaped up for the mouth of Mill Basin, and cautiously entered the narrow waterway. On the one side was the foot of Flatbush Avenue; on the other side five dilapidated piers jutted into the basin, like five dirty fingers. Faded signs at the head of the first four piers successively announced Mr. Kissen was engaged in the sand and gravel business, cement, engine, boat-

repair and dredging. A freshly painted sign at the head of the fifth pier read: KISSEN COAL FOR QUALITY.

Biff eased the wheel as he made the approach, and with a gentleness that one might use maneuvering a baby carriage, slipped past the derrick and tug lying at the end of the pier and warped the barge alongside the coaling rack, directly beneath the hoppers.

Biff pointed out Kissen's offices, a cluster of low sheds off the foot of the pier, and after helping Agnes off the boat and wishing her luck, he strolled out to the head of the pier to where the derrick and tug were tied.

FROM the pilothouse of the tug a heavy-set graying man waved to Biff. "How's it feel ownin' your own, son?" he called.

Biff recognized the tug-master, Pappy Olsen. He grinned up at Olsen. "So far, so good, Pappy. Ought to try it sometime."

"If that's standard equipment when you're the boss, maybe I will." Olsen slyly tilted his head to the foot of the pier where Agnes' shapely figure was disappearing into Kissen's office.

"Scotty's niece," Biff explained. He launched into an account of what had taken place that morning.

Olsen shook his head in disgust. "Kissen's a corker, all right. But there's nothing much you can do with him, once his mind is made up."

Biff looked curiously at the derrick secured to the tug. The huge piece of equipment was a familiar sight in the harbor, neglected like the rest of Kissen's holdings, its towering steel crane scabbed with rust and badly in need of scaling. Despite its condition it was an expensive machine and Biff had a hard time convincing himself of the meaning of the hose lines snaked from the tug into the hold of the derrick.

"An eyesore, all right," agreed Olsen. "He won't spend a dime today that can wait till tomorrow."

"Taking her out today?"

Olsen nodded. "Rush job at South Amboy. Big deal, I understand." He glanced at his watch. "Kissen better be gettin' out here if he expects to close it on time— Here comes that pretty miss of yours, an' I don't think she's had much success."

It was quite evident from the dejected way Agnes was walking over to the *Colossus* she had failed to move Mr. Kissen. Biff watched Sweeney help her aboard, and suddenly he became indignant at Kissen's unreasonable and niggardly attitude. Something should be done, and could be, he thought, glancing again at the layout of the hose lines on the derrick.

Biff wavered in his decision. He had no wish to antagonize Kissen and jeopardize his coaling run, but he was realizing an overpowering desire to help the girl. That this desire did not stem entirely from his longing to see justice done, he was only subtly aware.

"Pappy, I need a favor done. Real bad."

"Name it, son. Name it."

"I want you to break down. Right here. Blow an air-pump, or what have you. With nothing else in the basin, Kissen will have to use the *Colossus.*"

Olsen shrewdly looked down at Biff. "Figurin' you'll be doin' him a favor, an' maybe you can talk turkey about Scotty keepin' his job?"

"Something like that."

Olsen looked uncomfortable. "A favor's one thing, son; a towin' fee belongin' to the company's another."

"The fee is yours," Biff said quickly. "I'll mail a check to your boss in the morning. You can set him straight."

Olsen scratched his chin thoughtfully. "Come to think of it, the engineer was complainin' about a rod heatin' up on the way over—"

"Pappy, you're a wonderful man."

Back aboard the *Colossus,* Biff ushered Agnes up to the pilothouse. "In about five minutes we're going to haul Kissen's derrick to South Amboy," he told her. "So you stick around. I think Kissen may want to talk to you about Scotty again."

Agnes looked puzzled. "Why should he change his mind? He was pretty definite in his attitude a few minutes ago."

"Tell you later. Here he comes now. Say a little prayer that he isn't a lot smarter than I'm giving him credit for."

From the pilothouse Biff watched Mr. Kissen at the end of the pier violently gesturing up at a placid Olsen who was helplessly shrugging his shoulders. Mr. Kissen angrily turned away and hurried down the pier to the *Colossus.*

"Can you make South Amboy in three hours?" he shouted to Biff, as he drew near.

"With the tide setting we'll better it," Biff said.

"Then hop to it, young man. Hop to it!"

Within ten minutes the *Colossus* was inching its way out of the basin, the derrick firmly secured alongside. When they safely cleared the narrow mouth Biff pushed his engines full ahead, and an hour later saw them well off Rockaway Point, heading

Illustrated by Stuart Hay

"If I can be of any help—" Biff offered.

"Doctors!" snorted Mr. Kissen. "They'll sign anything for a four-dollar fee!"

across the smooth waters of the lower bay. Off in the distance a milky haze shrouded the Jersey shore.

Mr. Kissen, pacing the deck of the derrick, glanced at his watch for perhaps the hundredth time, studied the foaming wash swishing astern and was apparently satisfied he would be there on time. He disappeared within the derrick housing.

"I'm enjoying the trip," Agnes said, "but you still haven't told me why Mr. Kissen should change his mind about Scotty."

"Just wait," Biff advised, looking down at the derrick's freeboard which was decreasing imperceptibly, but still decreasing. He wondered when Mr. Kissen would awake to the fact his derrick was sinking.

ALMOST with the thought, Mr. Kissen appeared on deck. He looked about him puzzled for a moment, as if aware of something being wrong but not able to quite put his finger on it. Suddenly he spun on Biff, who was leaning lazily on the pilothouse sill.

"Young man, don't you think it's about time for you to be laying your lines?"

Biff looked surprised. "Lines for what? We're rigged properly."

"Lines for pumping," Mr. Kissen said.

Biff managed to look further surprised. "Pumping? Pumping what?"

"The derrick, of course," Mr. Kissen said impatiently. "Needs pumping every hour or so. Everybody knows that. Better start stretching in. Should have been done long ago."

Biff gazed solemnly at Mr. Kissen. "You mean your derrick leaks?"

"Of course it leaks!" Mr. Kissen snapped. "The towing vessel keeps suction lines to its bilges. You should have had yours in her before we left the basin."

Biff slowly shook his head. "Seems a terrible way to run a big piece of equipment. Suppose a tug isn't around to pump it out?"

"Her own steam is up, in that case," Mr. Kissen declared in exasperation. "Now let's stop this chattering and break out those lines!"

"You should have warned me about this before we started," Biff said.

SOMETHING akin to shock entered Mr. Kissen's eyes. He removed his glasses and blinked at Biff. "Warned you about what?"

"The *Colossus*," Biff said, "has a pump for her own bilges, but that's all. The fire-pump intake is a rigid connection to the hull—"

"You fool!" Mr. Kissen shrieked. He threw up his arms. "Why didn't you tell me this before we started? Why didn't you—"

"You hired me for a towing job," Biff interrupted coldly. "You assume too much that every boat is equipped to take suction. And speaking of fools, only an idiot would neglect a derrick so it had to be pumped as frequently as this one!"

"Turn back!" bellowed Mr. Kissen. "Turn—" He wheeled and stared in dismay at the Rockaways, now lying far astern.

"We're halfway across," Biff agreed. "If we can't reach Amboy, we can hardly get back to the basin."

Mr. Kissen mopped his face with a handkerchief. "All right. Call the Battery for a tug. Maybe we can get one here in time."

"No radiotelephone on board," Biff said. "Later on I hope to be able to afford one."

Mr. Kissen groaned. He raised a quivering finger at Biff. "You knew all the time about pumping this derrick! You saw the lines Olsen had on her!" His eyes shifted to Agnes standing beside Biff. "I see it now. You and that girl! You're getting even. You brought the derrick out here to sink it!"

"A childish thought," Biff protested. "Before that happens, I'll beach it off Romer Shoal. You can have it taken off before morning. There's nothing much for you to worry about."

Mr. Kissen slowly expelled his breath. "Nothing but a sixty-thousand-dollar contract if I'm not in Amboy by five!"

"We might do something, at that," Biff mused.

Mr. Kissen looked up hopefully.

"I think I can solve your problem," Biff said, "but I wonder if you'd do me a favor in return? It's a small one, really. Keep Scotty Ferguson on the job."

Mr. Kissen compressed his lips. "Blackmail, eh!"

"Nothing of the kind. I'm helping you out of the hole you dug yourself. Return the favor. Keep Scotty on and I'll have you dry and sound and in Amboy on time. Agreed?"

Mr. Kissen's face reflected much inner struggle. "Suppose I don't?" he asked finally.

Biff shrugged. "You're responsible for the derrick's condition."

Mr. Kissen sighed in resignation. "I suppose—"

"It won't work," Agnes interrupted. She turned to Biff, apologetically. "Scotty wouldn't want this sort of an arrangement. To know he wasn't wanted would annoy him, and then to retire and have each check come in grudgingly—well, he just wouldn't like it."

Biff lowered his voice to a whisper. "Now listen; a check is a check. It buys the groceries. Let me handle this. Once Kissen gives his word, he'll keep it."

"But a tug-master is supposed to be like a doctor," Agnes said, plainly embarrassed by her censuring, "I mean you're supposed to do everything in your power to save vessels, lending all aid and so on."

OVER on the derrick Mr. Kissen apparently had little trouble hearing this last, for he immediately purred with satisfaction. "Of course," he said, rubbing his bony hands. "Of course—" He lifted a warning finger at Biff. "You've admitted you can keep this derrick afloat! Young man, if you beach it I'll have your license voided before morning!"

Biff eyed Agnes stonily. He had had no intention of beaching the derrick, or even of being late at South Amboy. But he had counted on Mr. Kissen thinking the worst. "Nice going," he muttered to her. "You certainly fouled up this detail."

Agnes humbly lowered her eyes. "I'm sorry," she said in a small voice. "But it did seem so unethical."

Biff shouted down to Sweeney who was sitting on the rail: "Break out that handy-billy from the rope locker!"

Mr. Kissen smiled blandly at Biff. "Need I tell you that this tow is the last work you'll be doing for me?"

Biff glared over to the derrick. "In that case you can operate the 'billy yourself!"

Mr. Kissen removed his coat with a flourish. He flexed his spindly arms. "Exercise, young man, never hurt anyone!"

Biff glumly turned his attention to the wheel.

DISTRESS clouded Agnes' small face. "I feel so terrible about this. I hadn't thought of the trouble he could make for you."

Biff gave her a side glance. She was looking at him wistfully. Her blue eyes were enormous. Something in the vicinity of Biff's heart slipped a peg and he softened.

"It's okay," he sighed. "You were absolutely right, anyway. It was a dirty way to drive a bargain, even with that old sourpuss."

"Suppose," Agnes asked thoughtfully, "you didn't know the derrick was leaking, and it sank while we were still tied to it?"

"We'd start swimming," Biff said.

An hour later Biff nosed the derrick into a South Amboy slip and secured it to the wharf. When Agnes left the boat to make a phone call, Biff stared moodily across at Mr. Kissen who was putting on his coat, breathing hard and perspiring but looking quite fit.

"Never remember my feeling so good," Mr. Kissen observed briskly. "Young man, I think I can use a shallow-draft boat like yours. If you find the going rather rough from now on perhaps I'll take it off your hands."

The implied threat was clear. Mr. Kissen was not without influence among firms daily in need of tugs.

"What did you pay for it, fifteen thousand?" Mr. Kissen asked. "I'll give you twelve."

"Drop dead," Biff said. His tone lacked enthusiasm.

Mr. Kissen chuckled. "Tut-tut, now. You've gambled and lost. Take it gracefully." He turned to greet Agnes returning from the wharf. "And here's the young lady with the ethics. An admirable trait."

Agnes bestowed a dimpled smile on Mr. Kissen. "Thank you." She looked over at Biff. "I've called Mr. Schuman, and he says you haven't much of a salvage case—"

"Salvage?" Mr. Kissen smiled indulgently. "Certainly you haven't a case. If that's Schuman, of Schuman and Bates, you can accept his opinion as gospel. Good man."

"But after explaining the circumstances," Agnes continued, "he said you certainly have a fine suit for damages against the Kissen Corporation. It's Mr. Schuman's opinion that if a derrick, through neglect of the owner, endangers a towing vessel, damages can be sought—especially when the owner of the derrick did not warn the master such dangers exist. He said you have nothing to lose if you press for salvage at the same time."

The smile faded from Mr. Kissen's face. "It won't stick!" he sputtered. "My lawyers will make hash of any such case. Schuman must be losing his mind.

"He seemed very pleased," Agnes told Biff, "when I said I was a passenger during the trip. He said passengers placed in jeopardy were also entitled to compensation—if suffering from shock, like I am."

"Nonsense!" fumed Mr. Kissen. "Pure nonsense!"

"In any event Mr. Bates—the criminal half," Agnes explained, turning to Mr. Kissen—"Mr. Bates thinks that criminal negligence would certainly enter the picture. He says that once the local marine inspectors hear of the suit, the president of the Kissen Corporation will have more to worry about than mere civil actions."

Mr. Kissen opened his mouth. He closed it.

"Mr. Bates," Agnes said, "claims that in his opinion you are over a barrel, and you probably have enough sense to see it."

Mr. Kissen fumbled with his glasses. He looked uncertainly at Sweeney and Biff. Both men were gazing admiringly at Agnes.

"Never did like courts," Mr. Kissen said shortly. "Too unpredictable." He cleared his throat. "I don't think we have any differences here that can't be ironed out. Ferguson keeps his job, and Hayden his coaling run. That what you want?"

"With no hard feelings," Agnes warned.

Mr. Kissen sighed. "Young lady, a few minutes ago I spoke of gracefully taking a beating. I think I can follow my own advice. If you two will wait until I've concluded some business I'll prove it by taking you to lunch." He strolled away, shaking his head.

Agnes came up to the pilothouse, beaming her happiness. "He's not really a bad skate," she said. "I'll bet it's his ulcer that's mean."

"There's a spot on your chin," Biff said thoughtfully. He reached for a handkerchief.

Agnes looked surprised, but she obediently lifted her small face. "Funny. I just freshened up—"

"THAT wasn't a bit ethical," she whispered after a breathless moment.

Biff kept his arms firmly about Agnes' slim waist. "Speaking of ethics: Don't try to tell me it's possible to explain a case to two lawyers and receive an opinion in the one minute you were gone?"

"Their phone was busy," she murmured, "so I improvised." She dreamily veiled her eyes. "Are you finished with that spot?"

Biff watched Mr. Kissen violently gesturing up at a placid Olsen.

A dramatic story of Hong Kong today by the able author of "The Lord of Thundergate," "The Splendid Californians" and other well-remembered books.

MOON

by SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

WAKING up was painfully difficult. Tom Channing struggled out of a haze which was between sleep and semi-consciousness. His head ached; he was aware that when he opened his eyes they would burn. He coughed and choked. Rolling to his back, he heard the crackling of the straw on which he lay, and sat up dizzily.

Coal balls in an open Chinese brazier glowed like a carnelian necklace in the blackness. Acrid fumes came from the coal gas unable to escape from the cubbyhole where the door was locked and the shuttered window was barred.

Yesterday morning Tom Channing had wakened in Hong Kong. Before leaving the house, he had told Abigail that his day would be spent in preparation for a waterworks installation for which his company, Western Trading, was awaiting the apparatus, very hush-hush. Hong Kong was dependent upon mainland reservoirs; without water, or with contaminated water, the city was defenseless. And Channing had been slugged on the way to the office.

The straw on which he sat was similar to where he had slept during the Hong Kong occupation. Tom, as a Western Trading man, had come through that time with no other marks than a continuing gauntness. Now strange perilous days seemed to be ahead; now, too, he was married. And Channing, who understood the Chinese, had been uneasy.

His knowledge of China told him, because of heat in the room, he must be inland and north of Hong Kong. He had been doped after the attack, and guessed he had been taken away by automobile; his body didn't ache from being jolted in a cart.

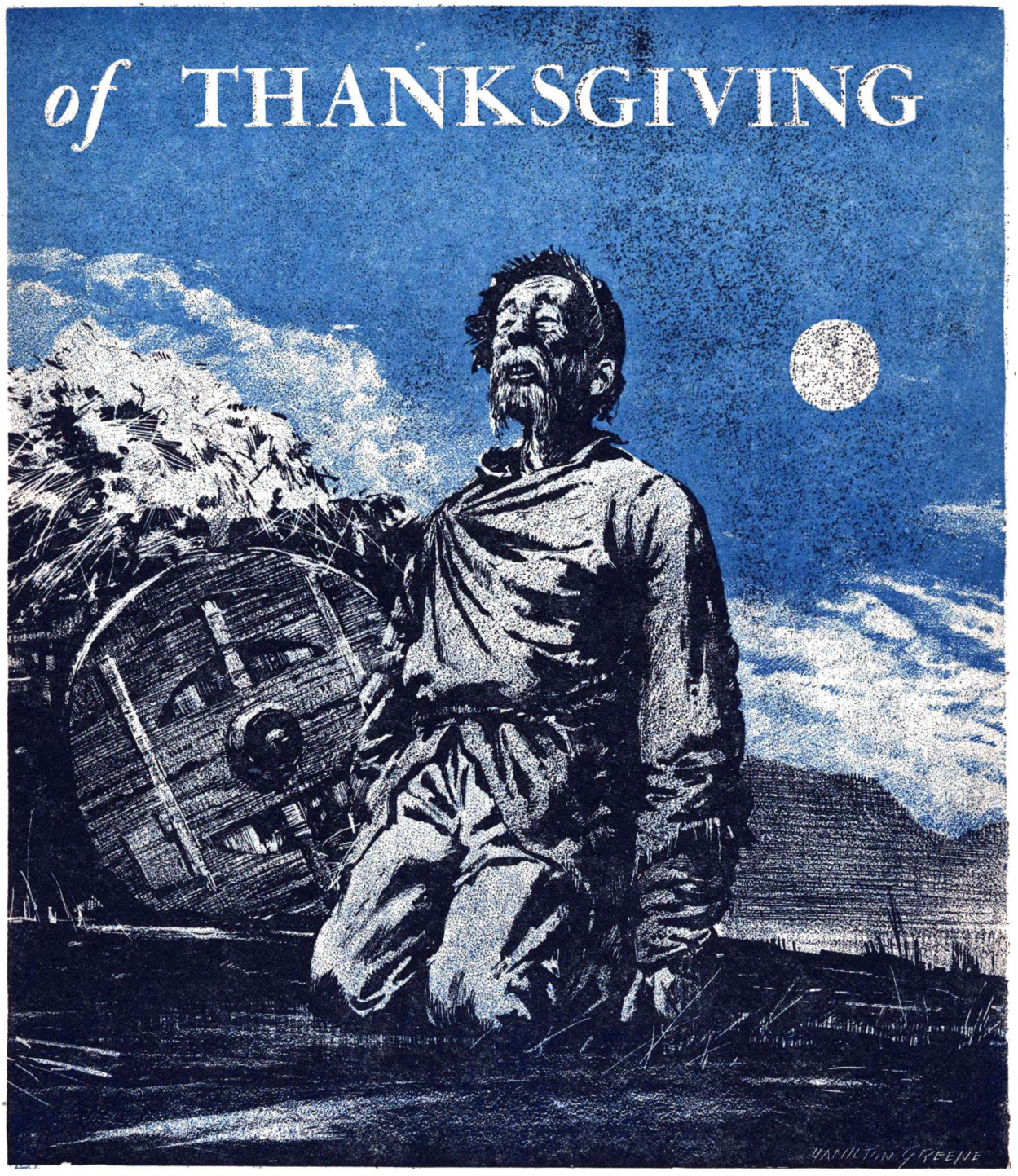
His throat was dry and scratchy as the straw beneath him. He thought of the glass of water left untouched on yesterday morning's breakfast table; and with tightening throat he thought of Abigail, only months ago a bride. She would be wondering fearfully what had happened to him. And with reason: Hong Kong was on edge these days. But she would be told that he might have been kidnaped and was being held for ransom.

Abigail couldn't know for certain, because Tom hadn't yet been ordered to write and sign a ransom note, as was customary. He would have no choice but to do it, and he well knew this.

"Hell!" said Tom aloud.

DURING Tom's years in Hong Kong, few foreigners had been kidnaped, common as was the practice among the Chinese. Crown Colony action in such cases had been swift and successful, and punishment was drastic. Now rough characters had

of THANKSGIVING



slipped into Hong Kong, Chinese smelling the money to be made by kidnaping someone in an American company; men shrewd enough to get him into Red China, where the authorities would find an appeal to recover an American amusing indeed.

Although Tom had little hope of bargaining with his captors, they would believe that for him to have shouted about the fumes was a sign of weakness. Before long someone would come. Dead, he was worthless to the kidnapers. He had to be living, so he could be shown to a go-between before the money was paid over. Everything appeared obvious to Channing.

AND so he waited. His eyes were heavy. He heard no street sounds outside, no shouts, no laughter. A rat gnawed away somewhere, but that was all.

How long it was before the ancient lock grated, and the door was opened, he had no idea. Light from a white winter sun blinded him.

A Chinese, quilted jacket criss-crossed with cartridge belts, stood in the doorway. Tom drew cold air deep into his lungs before seeing that the Chinese, young, carried a tray on

Illustrated by
HAMILTON GREENE

Tom Channing had been slugged on the way to the office. . . . Reds! But how could kidnaping him be of use to them?

which was a bowl with rice, a teapot, and a bowl for tea. Another Chinese, thin, dark, similarly dressed but with a rifle cradled in his arms, was behind the first man.

TOM's head cleared while the pair glowered at him. Nothing was to be gained by questions, less by a show of anger.

The two Chinese looked to Channing like army deserters who'd been engaged by the kidnaper; and Tom, long in the Orient, wondered if men who had been bought once couldn't be bought twice. If he could offer a larger payment than the kidnaper, and make these fellows positive that they would get it in Hong Kong dollars, that was the thing to try.

"N' ho a?" the scowling Chinese with the tray demanded abruptly. "You are not cold?"

Tom said hoarsely, *"Ng' pin yat teng*—no, but I would as soon freeze as suffocate—"

"What did you expect?" the Chinese snapped, in English. "Central heating?"

Tom's reply, for all his surprise at the shift in language, and the vindictiveness, was steady. "Didn't expect to be here. I—"

"And where are you?"

"Don't suppose it makes much difference," said Tom.

The Chinese snarled: "Not to you!"

The man's resentment toward Channing was obvious, and it was equally obvious to Tom that the Chinese didn't act nor sound like a deserter who could be bribed. There seemed something almost personal in the Chinese' angry nastiness; or was he, English-speaking as he was, seething for some reason with *ch'i*, that ungovernable and unexplainable fury which drove Chinese wild?

Whichever it might be, Tom had no intention of angering the man more. He said mildly: "Thanks for bringing me food and tea." He put a hand to his racked throat. "First, can I have water—"

"Water!" shouted Feng Wong, the man with the tray. He half turned, his mouth twisting, and shouted in Chinese to his companion: "Water! The American wants water, brother! Water!"

What set the pair into great yells of laughter had no meaning for Tom. What was so damned funny?

In an uneasy attempt to find out, Tom quoted: " 'When the pool is dry, the fish will be seen.' I do not understand—"

"You will," grinned the English-speaking Chinese maliciously. "You will understand, Channing. And soon."

With an assumed placidity which Tom was far from feeling now, he remarked: "Sooner the better."

"You think so?"

"Might as well have the bad news," said Tom.

FENG WONG's eyes glittered, and he seemed about to exult concerning what he knew which Channing didn't know. Then he said: "You are bloody smart, Channing. I was almost tempted to tell you—what is not mine to say." His voice rose. "It is your kind who make fools of us. Am I not aware how you herd us like pigs in America? How you kick us, curse us, throw us filth from your tables, steal our women—"

"Ever been in America?" asked Tom.

"When the time comes and I do go," promised Feng Wong, "it will be as a liberator."

As if the tray the Chinese held were a symbol of servility, Feng Wong stooped and slapped it before Channing. Then, deliberately, he spat into the rice; the other Chinese, in the doorway, grunted approval.

"Pretty," said Tom Channing. "New custom?"

Feng Wong, seemingly pleased with himself, said: "Perhaps. The customs of our enslavement are gone." He patted his cartridge belt. "These are what make customs now, Channing. Bullets."

The slam of the door and clack of the lock emphasized the Chinese' final word. Tom could hear the pair laughing outside, then the sound of their footsteps as they walked away.

Reds.

REACHING in the dark along the floor for the tray, Tom found the teapot. He drank from the spout, like a whiskered Chinese actor. The tea was no longer too hot, but it was bitter. Even so, it was liquid, and Tom drank until there were tea leaves in his mouth.

Why had the Reds grabbed him? Ironically, Channing remembered that part of his job with Western Trading had been to get people out of trouble, people who knew nothing about China. Now he, who did know, couldn't help himself. He was inside Red China. All hands would be against him. Nor could he hope for aid from Hong Kong.

Chewing on the tea leaves, he asked himself why he had been seized. Higher ransom, if the Reds were after money, could have been obtained for return of someone more important. Possibly the kidnaper was a Red commander of some sort who intended to make money for himself, and the plot wasn't actually a Red plot at all.

It was then that Tom hit on what it might be, although he had nothing on which to go save the laughter of the two Chinese. Water! The secret intended installation for reservoirs now on the way to Hong Kong. There was the possibility that the Reds had learned about it somehow; but how could kidnaping him be of use to them? He was not an engineer; he was merely a W.T. man who had handled the sale and the transportation.

"Am I not aware how you herd us like pigs in America?"

If the Reds supposed that getting him out of the way would have anything to do with installation, that only he knew how it should be done, they were fooling themselves. But—could they intend the price of his release to be the refusal of Western Trading to deliver the machinery to the Crown Colony?

The tea leaves were bitter in Tom's mouth. He removed them with a finger, and, his thoughts as bitter as the brown leaves, acted automatically as if he were a guest in a Chinese house. There the tea leaves were considered the Eyes of Buddha, from their shape. If they got into a mouth accidentally, they must be kept until dry in the palm of the hand. Later, they should be burned in clean flame.

Custom meant nothing to the Communists, as the Red had taunted Channing. They had ordered the abandonment of them, teaching children to despise grandfathers who followed tradition. Ancestors were old bones. Sacrificial tables were pieces of wood. It was especially forbidden to worship the god of war, Juan Ti, because prayers to this deity were to end fighting between men, and he was addressed as the Prince of War-Won Peace.

In sheer need of something to do, despite the uselessness of it, Channing was about to feel his way toward the shuttered window when again he heard footsteps. The door was unlocked and pushed open. This time an old Chinese shuffled in. A young Red, armed, remained outside.

COMING from brilliant winter sunlight to darkness, the old man stumbled and almost fell.

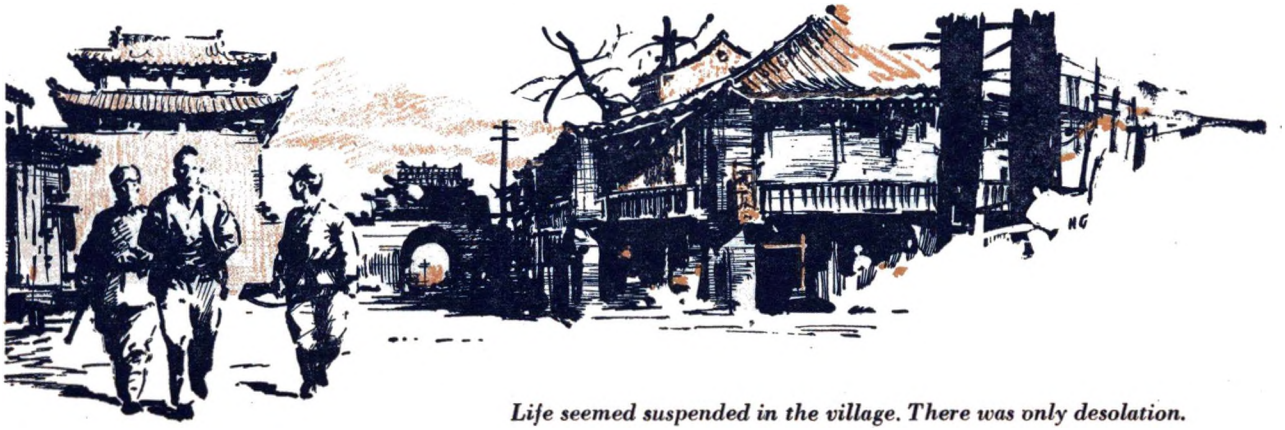
"Are you too old to walk, too blind to see the tray?" shrilled the Red. "We feed only those who are useful, ancestor of apes."

The old man shook his head, as if to get the sound of the insult, the more horrible to him since it came from young to old, out of his ears. His entire body trembled.

In a low, quiet voice, Tom said: *"Ah Kung tok p'un ni shu' . . .* Grandfather, the tray is here."

The *ah kung* stooped for it. He stood between Tom and the guard as he bent; and as his hands reached the tray, he started to lift his head, undoubtedly to see if he knew the prisoner. His eyes stopped when they recognized what was in the palm of Tom's hand—the tea leaves—and it must have been the symbol of belief in customs which made his hands shake and his mouth quiver.

"Chin chung pao k'u," the old man mumbled; "a man must be loyal to what he believes until death."



Life seemed suspended in the village. There was only desolation.

The ah kung *started to lift his head to see if he knew the prisoner. His eyes stopped when they recognized*

Then the *ah kung* saw that the prisoner was not a Chinese, a fact which increased the turbulence within him.

Tom, heart pounding, whispered: "You could pray as you wish in Hong Kong. You would have face again. You will be paid all your life if you get me out of here. If the shutter is opened for me—"

"Once," Tom heard the old man mutter, "I was brave enough to stroke the beard of a tiger, but now—"

"Why are you so slow, toad's offspring?" the guard demanded.

"Now, I am afraid," the *ah kung* moaned, his hands shaking so that the bowls clattered against the teapot.

"Break anything," warned the guard, "and I will break your bones."

The Red could see how the old man was trying to control the tray. Cursing, he rushed in to level it; he grabbed with one hand at the tray so roughly that the earthenware slid off and shattered on the floor.

Infuriated because he himself was responsible for the breakage, the Red cried: "Pick up the pieces, clumsy idiot."

I could grab his gun, thought Tom, *but what good'd that do?*

The guard, now, grinned as the *ah kung* bent. Then, with a shout of laughter, the Red kicked the grandfather.

"It is a new custom," the guard cackled.

There could have been no greater insult, Tom knew. He had seen one Chinese kick another, after which knives were always drawn; but he had never before seen any young man kick an old one. Nor, when the *ah kung* glanced once at Tom, had Channing ever seen eyes so malevolent. They were unearthly slits of glittering black jade.

"You will be forced to continue this lowest of labors," the guard gloated. "You were warned that if you did not fulfill this miserable duty of serving an American, you would get no relief from it, neither day nor night,

what was in the palm of Tom's hand.

without food nor sleep, as an example to other old apes—"

The *ah kung* said strangely, "I bow to the heavenly commands," and the Red kicked him again.

"You bow only to our Leader," the Red reminded.

When the old man, the pieces on the tray, turned to go, Tom felt the *ah kung's* foot against his. A quick pressure. Accidental? Or a promise?

Tom found out when he was alone. The old man had shoved a piece of sharp earthenware to where Channing could find it.

Great, thought Tom. *Now I've got a weapon with which to fight my way out of Red China.*

Grimly, after that, he supposed the *ah kung* had left him the sharp piece of broken china so that, according to ancient custom, he could open a vein, and by killing himself when there was no hope of escape, remain loyal. Such frustration of his captors, formerly, would have meant lost face for them. Those days were gone. But Tom couldn't help but think that if he, alive, were to be the means of helping the Reds, the choice which the old man had given him, chilling as it was, could not be passed over.

Yet a captive's self-destruction for the retention of honor didn't seem to fit in with the old man's malevolent face. If the broken china was useless as a weapon, and was not intended to permit Tom to kill himself, what was its purpose?

There was a hint of panic in the way Tom forced himself to go over exactly what had happened and what had been said. It took time before he connected the broken piece with his own whisper to the *ah kung* to unbar the shutter from the outside. But if the old man believed the Reds' captive could do anything from within about the shutter, he was completely wrong.

There was not enough space to work the makeshift tool against the exterior bar. The window was too tightly shuttered. Tom doubted if he could have weakened the bar enough to break it, even if he could have worked the earthenware against it.

The *ah kung's* flash of impotent fury, Tom knew, had nothing to do with the fact that an American was a captive. The anger was compounded of loss of face, of a kick, of past insults and future lack of hope; and Tom's single hope was that the old man would remember the offer Tom made to him. Hong Kong and sufficient money to live according to old customs. It was not worth much as a hope, but it was Tom's only one.

THE guards who came for Channing tied his hands behind his back before shoving him into the street. Outside, Tom's eyes streamed with tears as he stared, in the brilliant sunlight, to see what was around.

Life seemed suspended in the village. There were no farmers bringing basketloads of chickens, nor carrying pigs with feet tied together. No duck merchant swam his fat birds in the ice-edged pond. The tea-houses were deserted, their summer vines shriveled to the roots. No carts moved. Nor, in this time of the White Moon, was there the customary pile of dried stalks in the temple courtyard, to be set alight in thanks to the divinities for a good year. There was only desolation.

The house to which Tom was taken was the largest and best in the village. Red soldiers in the corridor stared apathetically at Channing. Some cursed him as he passed.

One Chinese sat behind the teak table in the central room. He was in his thirties, his face oily, his mouth lax, his eyes drooping. What was most noticeable about him was the writhing of his hands, a nervous undulation bringing them into positions like the snakes carved on the legs of the former offering-table of the temple.

Watching the hands, Tom felt himself squeezed, compressed, in their writhings, a victim to be first crushed and then swallowed.

FENG WONG, the Red who spoke English, stood behind his leader. "Address General Ho Wao-tsi through me," he said.

The General's hands wriggled still faster as he began to speak, in the mandarin of North China, not Cantonese. Tom understood most of it, but waited until Feng Wong translated.

Did Channing realize the impossibility of rescue or escape? "You do," commented Feng Wong. "I see the marks of woman's tears on your face, and—"

"Get on with it," said Tom.

Feng Wong repeated the General's words with flourishes. Tom listened with ice chilling his heart, ice cold and sharp as that which edged the pond in the village. The Reds wanted the anti-contamination machinery.

However, there was no intention of harming Hong Kong's water supply, either by sabotage or aerial action, Tom was told. Channing would not be harming his own people by agreeing to what the General wanted.

"We desire the machinery so we can protect the people of China everywhere," anounced Feng Wong. "We will protect millions all over the world against proletarian vengeance. It will be an act of mercy."

The lying explanation was typically Red. Hong Kong, which would be stubbornly defended if necessary, would be helpless without water.

"All you've bloody well got to do," translated Feng Wong, "is, as shipping agent, have the vessel approach Hong Kong from the West Lamma Channel."

This course, Tom knew, would take the freighter into Chinese waters, where it could be attacked without fear of intervention.

Tom said truthfully: "Hong Kong officials won't permit that."

"The asses trust whatever you do."

"What makes you think I'll do anything?"

Feng Wong repeated this to the Red leader, listened, and then translated; "If you are considering behaving like a bloody hero, remember that you have a wife in Hong Kong."

THE rope which tied Tom's hands cut into his wrists. He made himself stand motionless, and speak steadily.

"Won't work," said Tom. "Officials'll know I was kidnaped. And released for a price. Such as a change in the ship's course."

"They will not think you were kidnaped. You will explain your absence by saying that a Chinese told you about precious jades which could be bought cheaply. You went for the jades, instead of to the waterworks." Feng Wong giggled. "The officials will believe the account on seeing the jades we will give you to take back."

Tom ignored the believable explanation. He said: "Ship's course won't be changed on my say-so. Not these days."

"Oh, yes—you will fabricate a message supposedly received from the ship, easy for you to do, saying there is a plague case on board. You inform the officials; they believe you. Then like all ships to enter quarantine, it takes the west channel. You see?"

Tom did see. The plan was diabolically shrewd. The officials would not even doubt Tom's report to them. Nor would the Hong Kong authorities fear that Reds would board a vessel believed to fly the plague flag.

As if thinking aloud, Tom said: "What makes you suppose I'll do what you want if I'm back in Hong Kong and free?" His eyes hardened. "What's the rest of it?"

"You will be taken to your home. You will tell your wife she is not to go out of your house. If she leaves, attempting escape, she dies. If you fail to have the ship's course altered, you assure her death. The police cannot save her. Many of us," Feng Wong concluded fiercely, "would consider it a privilege to be killed ourselves after killing her."

General Ho Wao-tsi said in mandarin: "Make certain he understands what we will do to his wife."

Tom did understand. More, the Red leader meant it, because his

General Ho Wao-Tsi's refusal lashed the elders. Didn't the Old Ones know sacrifices were relics of the days when men were slaves to imaginary gods?

hands were not writhing, now that he concentrated on the part of the plan which completely trapped the victim.

Reds in Hong Kong would carry out the threat. Tom knew that Abigail would refuse to accede to what the Reds wanted, even with her life at stake, but, *I have no right to decide that for her,* Tom told himself, *although I'm sure what she'd say.*

He could see, in vision, her high-held head.

Unless he could get away, he was helpless. A decision had to be made; he understood the cost of refusal, the cost of acquiescence. It wasn't the matter of his own life. It was Abigail's life. Or the lives of Hong Kong's thousands. The possession of the city was involved, and honor, and the integrity of the country to which he himself belonged.

General Ho Wao-tsi was far too smart to press for an immediate answer. In Chinese fashion, he was letting his captive convince himself that there was no escape. Casually, the General asked Feng Wong what other details awaited attention.

Feng Wong checked them off on his fingers. General Ho Wao-tsi had soldiers brought before him, cautioned them about looting without sharing with others, and let them go. He sentenced two villagers to be shot.

Next, a number of old Chinese were prodded into the room. They had a request to make. Would Great and Powerful General give permission for children to gather dried stalks for the White Moon's sacrificial fire? This was the Ending-of-the-Year, when men offered thanks to heaven. If permission was granted, the village would be grateful.

General Ho Wao-Tsi's hands stopped writhing. His refusal lashed the elders. Did they expect children to waste their time when they could perform useful tasks? Didn't the Old Ones know such sacrifices were relics of days when men were slaves to other men and imaginary gods as well? *Mah!* If the Old Ones had the good of the village at heart, and wished to earn praise, they should persuade farmers to bring in food which was wrongfully hidden from the brave and hungry soldiers of the Great Leader.

WHEN the wrinkled old men had shuffled dejectedly away, Tom said without emphasis: "No." It was to him as if he spoke for Abigail also; there could be no choice.

Ho Wao-tsi's hands, for a fraction of time, stopped in their writhing. Then he spoke to Tom through Feng Wong, who told Tom that the General, a considerate man, would not immediately invoke the time-proven methods of securing consent, such as slicing, or the sniffing-of-pepper, or the lengthening-of-limbs. But Channing must keep these tortures in mind.

"Thought those were old customs," said Tom.

Feng Wong snapped, "You talk too much," and then Channing was taken back to his cubbyhole.

They were allowing him to ponder over the uselessness of refusal. This was the one thing which Tom didn't do. He did weigh the odds. On one side, the Reds. On the other, Tom Channing—and for a weapon, a broken piece of earthenware. None would help him, except, by long chance, the *ah kung* who had been kicked, or the other ancients who adhered to the old customs and sacrifices. There was no reason why they would help him. He meant nothing to them. He meant nothing unless he could offer something, such as payment in Hong Kong which would allow them to live away from the Reds, in return for his escape.

And when it came to that, how could old men do anything? There wasn't any such thing as a custom which demanded it, strongly as they believed in custom. The old fellows couldn't even have their winter sacrifice, the burning of dry stalks,

although Tom would have bet that the General would have found a way to permit it in return for fat pigs and plump ducks. . . .

At that moment, Tom ejaculated: "Maybe can do!" and then waited impatiently for the *ah kung* to bring the evening meal.

NOT until the old Chinese bent to place Tom's tray on the floor, did Channing speak. The guard outside the door could neither hear him, nor see the moving of his mouth.

"You are *fan-tung-feng-tzu,* anti-Red," whispered Tom. "You wish to worship for the White Moon of Thanksgiving. Promise the General food. In return, he will permit the sacrifice—elsewhere. He dare not allow it here, but if it were somewhere else, he could claim ignorance of it—"

"We have no money to buy him food."

"Promise it. Lie. Say you will get it from farmers, bringing it back in the cart in which you take the stalks to burn. Have the cart here when you bring my morning rice. I will account for the guard. Then hide me under the stalks and drive off, and—"

The *ah kung* breathed: "Fool them with a custom they despise?"

"Is your back too stiff to rise?" called the guard.

"Tell old men who help to come to Hong Kong," Tom went on. "Payment waits there. For you also. Once you are all out of the village, finding you would be like searching for ten grains of sand on a beach."

"I—I would bring my ancestral tablet with me. I would be a man again. I—yes, the General is greedy. I—it is impossible, but perhaps. . . . The cart could go on small roads unknown to the Red devils. . . . And so could we—perhaps—"

"Now go," pleaded Tom, "or the guard will suspect—"

"If the morning guard should be Feng Wong who kicked me," mouthed the *ah kung,* coming slowly erect, "open his vein with the earthenware. I intended you to do this, thus avenging an insult to me and assuring yourself a swift death from the Reds instead of torture."

The old man's face was blank as he turned to go, to be cursed out of Tom's hearing by the guard for his slowness. . . .

Once, in the night, a Red lieutenant came to ask Channing if he had altered his ridiculous decision. Tom, acting despondently, shrugged, satisfying the Red that the American was coming to his senses.

It was a long night.

Tom was sure that the *ah kung* would meet secretly with the Old Men. Custom would pull them one way, fear of the Reds the other. All would yearn to follow traditional ways; but whether they would risk their lives on Tom's promise he couldn't surmise. He did know the importance of the White Moon worship. What he did not know, and about which the village elders talked, was that it was written that when men no longer gave thanks to heaven, freedom vanished.

It was a long, long night. Formerly, Tom could have told the coming of dawn by the cries of vendors, a woman's voice as she borrowed fire to heat water, the rumble of carts coming in from the farms. Now there was silence. Not even the shouts of soldiers; none were posted here. Not even—was there the creaking of cart wheels?

Tom's heart began to pound. Yes. Cartwheels, and next, footsteps?

Near the door, on hands and knees, Tom waited. The lock clacked; the door was pushed open. When the scrawny figure of the *ah kung* was between Tom and daylight, with a guard having shoved the door inward, Tom leaped up and out, and was all over the Red at once. He smashed the guard under the chin, grabbed the rifle with his other hand, tore it away, and brought it down on the soldier's head before the Red could scream.

"It is Feng Wong," snarled the old man, putting down his tray. "Open his veins and let him die."

Instead, Tom said, "Come," and pulled the *ah kung* after him. "Your revenge will come when he is found guilty of my escape."

"I hope he dies slowly," said the *ah kung* savagely. "I hope the General is punished also. I hope they all burn—"

Tom said: "Give 'em time."

The cart, filled with stalks, waited in the frosty gray dawn. The *ah kung* slipped away, lest anything stop him from starting for Hong Kong. Tom climbed into the cart, shoved stalks away, lay flat, and before pulling the stalks back over him, said, "I am ready," to the old driver.

EVERY turn of the wheels took him nearer Hong Kong, to Abigail, to informing the authorities. Somewhere along the road, Tom guessed, the carter would pause and burn a few stalks, and according to custom, send prayers to heaven with the smoke at this time of the White Moon.

The wheels creaked; to Tom, they said: *"Cus-tom, cus-tom, cus-tom,"* And suddenly he began to laugh.

Custom, despised and jeered at by the Reds, was responsible for his escape. Custom had sprung the trap. He was out of it and on his way back, and everything was turning out fine. Everything was truly wonderful; and as the cartwheels creaked and creaked, Tom, awake all night, now slept.

The Redemption of Frederick Flye

A WEIRD FANTASY ON THE THEME OF TRANSMIGRATION

by JOHN CLAGETT

ALL my life I've liked fireflies, or as we call them in the medium-sized Southern town where I live, lightning bugs. A very descriptive name. As I say, I'd always enjoyed sitting in my yard in the evening when the earth was beginning to cool and the stars in the sky were matched below by a swarm of drifting specks of yellow-green light. But Fred Flye changed all that.

An odd relationship seemed to exist between Fred Flye and me. I didn't really like him—no one did. And yet from high school on, fate seemed to throw us together. We went to the same college and ended up as brothers in the same fraternity. When the war started, we, quite independently, secured commissions in the Navy and were assigned to the same type of duty—communications. We even took our training together. Morse was easy for me; but the blinker—that is, communicating with blinking lights—gave me a lot of trouble. Not Frederick Flye. He breezed through all the training with no strain. He was always better than I in school work.

Perhaps this Navy experience tended to draw us together somewhat when we returned to our home town after the war. I saw a good deal of him for a while; our wives got on well together. There was a vast difference in our fortunes, though, as I was making a struggling start in the contracting business, while Freddy was already a vice president in his family's bank.

Flye had always been a hard, unsympathetic character, but now the worst side of his nature seemed to come uppermost. He foreclosed mortgages, with obvious pleasure, in cases where a little compassion and time would have enabled the delinquent to pull through. He took delight in refusing applications for G.I. loans,

mouthing with enjoyment the well-worn phrase that it wasn't the Government's money he was handling; it was the bank's, and the bank didn't think 4½% was sufficient return. And that would be that.

I had already started consciously avoiding him when scandal rocked our little town. Christine Flye sued for divorce, and got it, when she presented irrefutable proof that Fred Flye had frequently beaten her, had in fact treated her with the utmost cruelty during most of their married life. This she had endured for the sake of their daughter; but when Flye started extending his brutalities to the bewildered and frightened little girl, Christine left him and went to court. After the decree she took her child and left town. I've never seen either of them since.

We are fairly tolerant in our town, but that was too much. Fred Flye became something of an outcast, and additional stories of a brutality verging on sadism began to circulate. I avoided him completely for some months after the divorce. Then we met one day on a swimming float.

OUR country club is a modest affair situated on a bend of the Blue River. The water is clear, with sufficient depth for swimming and diving, and is a popular feature of the club. I was somewhat surprised one blue and gold June morning to find myself alone on the float. I relaxed in the warmth of the sun, smelling the clean odor of the seasoned planks of the float.

I sat up to light a cigarette from my watertight case, and saw Frederick Flye walking down the wooden stairs. He waved, dropped his towel to a bench, and dived into the water. I shrugged. No getting out of a meeting now!

As Flye's face rose above the silver gray of the boards I nodded in reserved welcome. You might not like Flye, but you had to admit him as a person. He was a striking individual. His hair was snow white, though he was in his thirties. The black brows arched slightly at the outer edges, then dipped sharply toward the long, high-bridged nose, forming two lines of expression, joined to the wide thin mouth by caliper lines of force.

"Nice day," I grunted. He didn't answer for so long that I thought he hadn't heard me. He seemed preoccupied; the hard, vital force usually radiated by the man was dimmed. Finally he nodded.

"Yeah. Yeah—nice day."

He slumped to the float, accepted my cigarette, and lit it with hands that shook slightly. The hands joined at the mouth and the slanting arms formed an accenting line over the sin-

You might not like Flye, but he was a striking individual.

gular birthmark on his left breast. It was a reddish-brown, virtually perfect silhouette of a flying seagull.

For a while we were silent. The green water gurgled past, and over in the river bottom across from the club a single bobwhite whistled his clear call, embodying in sound the peaceful drowsiness of the day. Then Flye spoke. I don't know just why he confided his thoughts to me, but perhaps it was natural. I had been in the past as close an approach to a friend as the guy had ever had.

"Lang, I'm worried as hell. I never thought much about anything other than myself, my own appetites and what I wanted. Then last night I started reading a book on India. There was a section of the Hindu religion. Know anything about that?"

"Nope. Can't say that I do."

"Well, I'm pretty vague on it myself, but one salient thing seemed to hit home. Look! They think that a man's soul is eternal—same as our preachers say. They think the soul goes through a big cycle of existences. It starts as the soul of the lowest animal, and works up to the soul of the Brahmin, the highest type. And more than that: They think the soul in each incarnation earns its position in the next life. A man who leads an evil life will go back. Hell, according to them, a man could even be reborn as an animal!" He shuddered. That guy seemed to be terribly affected somehow by what he'd read.

"SOUNDS like malarkey to me. What do they say's at the top of the scale? Is a Brahmin the highest development of this nomadic soul?"

"Oh, no. After a finally achieved life of human perfection, the soul attains a Nirvana, a oneness with the supreme ruling Power of the universe."

There was silence for a few minutes.

"God!" shuddered Flye. "Imagine being born as a dog. You know, Lang—once when I was a kid, I poured kerosene over a poor damned stray dog, and lit a match to him. No reason at all. I guess I've led a pretty evil life, but I'm telling you, Lang, things are going to be different. People are going to see a change in me!"

I got up, sick. I like dogs. It was all I could do to keep from kicking the fellow in the teeth. Without saying a word, I jumped into the water, swam ashore and went home.

The next morning I read in the paper that Frederick Phire Flye, well-known local banker, had been instantly killed the night before in an automobile accident.

The funeral was held quickly, and never in my life have I seen a man forgotten so quickly. The ripples on the surface of life that marked F. P. Flye subsided at once. Nothing was changed or improved through his existence on earth; nothing was changed—except perhaps that poor beaten dog he'd once martyred. I, for one, was glad Flye was dead.

IN August the nights at home are pretty muggy and hot, and almost every evening the fleeting light-shadows of heat lightning flicker on the horizon. Below on earth the lightning bugs reflect that uneasiness of the heavens. In swirling constellations they bring movement and change to the old peach orchard behind which my house stands. Fireflies like peach trees, and we always have them in vast numbers.

Dinner was finished one night, and I was sitting in the yard enjoying the coolness that seems to reflect from grass almost any time. I was pulling at a good cigar, and in general pretty well at peace with my world. Lightning bugs were everywhere. There were so many that one was even buzzing around my head, lighting his mysterious lantern in quick irregular flashes. I waved my hand languidly to drive him away.

Irregular? Did I say irregular? No, by heaven, they weren't irregular! They were of varying lengths, but they were regular as, as—the Lord save me!—as regular as a blinking signal light! The hot August night changed to cold, and earth and stars and fireflies whirled dizzily before my eyes!

The Firefly was flashing in code!

(The next day I thought of that hardly started cigar, and from curiosity went and looked. I couldn't find a shred of it. I may literally have swallowed it—anyway, it had

vanished. It had been in my teeth when I recognized the code. But reality as I had known it stopped for me in that moment.)

Dot-dot-dot dash-dash-dash dot-dot-dot!

Over and over again. *SOS.* Over and over again.

I ran for the house! The inner cold and the Firefly followed me. My wife was away, and I'm glad now. She would have thought me insane.

I slammed the door, and stood trembling in the living-room.

A speck of green light appeared beyond the screen.

Dot-dot-dot dash-dash-dash dot-dot-dot. *SOS.*

The international signal of distress, the mechanized cry for assistance, appeal of man to his brother man against the forces of nature!

SOS—SOS—SOS.

As in a nightmare I went to my room and got a flashlight. I returned to the front yard, and turned the flashlight toward that unceasing, utterly silent wail of despair.

My trembling disappeared; here, I knew, I stood before a chasm. I knew now that I was awake, for I had pinched my hand in the door when coming out, and even through my bewilderment I felt the pain. I lost sight of the signaling Firefly; nothing now indicated anything abnormal in the warm, lighted night.

I turned the flashlight in the direction of the peach grove, and with firm fingers commenced giving single long flashes—the signal for *"I am receiving you, continue sending."*

And the Firefly answered.

The dots and dashes flowed, not smoothly, but steadily. I was rusty on the code, and the message was repeated several times before I was sure of it.

"V FPF"—From Frederick Phire Flye! The message went on, slowly, painfully. I brought forgotten symbols back to mind, appalled at the thought of what was happening to me, of what I should always feel during my life if I missed the message.

"Help. Take me in house. Save me from. . . ."

The message had reached so far; I was walking toward the flashing insect, ready, in pity, to take the thing into the house out of the dangers of the night. But as I walked, a sudden sharp gust of wind screamed up the hillside. Branches whipped in the wind, the milling swarms of fireflies swirled and eddied in the gust, driven and hurled and carried away.

Fred Flye was gone, somewhere in the night, driven by that sudden, short gust of wind. I waited for hours, straining with suspense at each new firefly seen.

Frederick Phire Flye didn't come back. But I lived for a while in a new world. In the evening, when dusk brought the first glimmers of the fireflies' lights, I went out of doors. After midnight I would walk wearily back into the house at the insistence of Anne, and go to bed, but not to sleep. Even in the daytime the world was unreal; day's prosaic work-time duties laid a gloss of reality over it, but when I drove home through the woods in the late afternoon, I seemed to hear the distant, magic-awakening strains of a reed pipe, a flute wailing strange airs to a dying wind. Pan might lurk in the Southern woods; fauns and satyrs might dance to the pipes on moonless nights. Anything was possible to me now. Anne noticed my pallor, my nervousness, and I know it worried her.

"You're working too hard, dear," she said to me one night a week or so after Freddy Firefly's first appearance. God knows I hadn't been working at all, though I was glad of an excuse for my obvious preoccupation, but loss of sleep and certainty had made me irritable.

"Cut it out, Anne!" I nearly snarled. "There's nothing I can do about it. You know we're having a lot of trouble about those houses on the Jones tract. I'll be all right. Just don't worry about me!"

I had rarely taken that tone with Anne, dear Anne. Now her eyes widened in surprise, and I saw swift hurt spread over her face. She tried to smile.

"I will *not* leave you alone, Langley Williams. First thing you know, you'll be sick; then what will happen to your precious business?"

I glared at her, and started to leave the room; then I saw the tears starting to come, and I walked over to her and held her in my arms.

"Forgive me, Anne. I guess I'm just worried. Sorry I spoke to you like that. Don't cry, now."

It took a little doing. Seeing that she had broken me down, she worked me over a bit in the traditional female way. Finally she smiled. Then she said:

"Langley Williams, there's still another reason beyond business why you have to keep up your strength. You're going to be a father, my lad, and if you think that's not going to be a strain, just you wait!"

That was my first intimation that we were to have a baby, and for a while I forgot that there was such a thing as a Firefly. She got me to promise to take the next day off to go with her to the Firemen's Carnival, which I hadn't planned on doing, even though I am a volunteer fireman.

I don't know whether or not you know those affairs, the Firemen's Carnivals. In our town we still have a volunteer fire department, a fire department with pretty good equipment, but principally manned by volunteer citizens. It's a useful organization, and a pretty social one too. Regular firemen form the experienced core, but the volunteers are of considerable help. This particular Firemen's Carnival, designed to pay for some new equipment, was to be attended by fire crews from as much as thirty miles away. We never stopped to ask ourselves what would happen if a serious fire broke out somewhere too far away, but it seemed to be a thing that never happened. This was to be a big affair, with races, Midway, competitions, and all the sawdust magic of the county fair.

The fairgrounds lie some distance along the Marionstown Pike. It's a little far from our town, but it was placed there so that it would be close enough to Marionstown to tempt the people there to attend fairs and carnivals.

The day of the fair was hot and bright, but fluffy white clouds with a tinge of gray in them were poking above the horizon as we left home.

"Thunderstorm today, honey," I told Anne as we got into the car.

"Feels like it, doesn't it, Lang? I'm glad the fair will be in weather-tight

The message was repeated several times: "Help. Take me in house . . ."

buildings. It would be a shame to have it rained out."

A mile or so out of town, we passed the Blake Home. We rather hurriedly and automatically averted our eyes from the old building itself, a sort of instinctive defense mechanism common to any responsible citizen passing that dwelling of nearly a hundred small unfortunates. A hundred years ago the structure had been the Blake mansion; many wings had been added. Then bad days had come, and the last of the line had willed it as an orphans' home. Scrolled and towered and gingerbreaded, it had offered, and still did, relative comfort and decency; but the dry and brittle wood showed in spots through the thick layers of paint and it had a shabby, run-down look. Some day we would do something about it; but towns move slowly.

THE fair was lively and full of the color of such doings. I lost five dollars on the trotting races; Anne won seven. I knew it would take me a long time to live that down. We visited the Midway, ate cotton candy, pitched hoops, greeted friends and absorbed the sounds and smells of a carnival. In that atmosphere Frederick Flye and his fate became an unreal dream.

Late in the afternoon the threatening clouds boiled suddenly over the sky. The heavy air hung quiet and thick; gay banners drooped on their staffs, and men mopped the insides of shirt collars with limp handkerchiefs. The storm broke with a great display of lightning, and one sharp hard burst of wind that leveled a couple of booths. Enough rain followed to lay the dust; then the sun emerged again and the smell of drying canvas and dust were strong.

We had dinner in the main pavilion, the place run by the Methodist ladies. Hart Ramsey, the fire chief, was there.

"Hi, Lang," he bellowed, from half across the room. "Evenin', Miss Anne. Havin' a good time?"

"Indeed we are, Mr. Ramsey," answered Anne with enthusiasm. "It's very nice. I bet you've taken in a lot of money."

"We have that. Say, Lang, hope you don't need to make any phone calls to town. Bill Scredder tells me the lines are down. Lightnin' must've got one of the poles."

We had no calls to make, and thought no more of the storm's effects, as Hart launched into an enthusiastic description of the forthcoming fireworks display.

The night was hot; the cool aftereffects of the storm died away quickly. Even the fitful wind was hot. I began to be tired, and wished that the fireworks, the main event of the night, had been scheduled for earlier than ten o'clock. Anne still looked fresh and gay; I remonstrated with her, mentioning her "condition" with mixed feelings of pride and concern.

"Men!" she said witheringly, yet smilingly. "There are about eight months to go, dear. Don't you know anything?"

I subsided.

I like fireworks, but at the height of the display my attention was taken away from the show by hearing someone say in astonished tones:

"Lookit that damn lightnin' bug, Harry! Ain't never seen one of them things lightin' like that! Have you?"

I looked along the outstretched arm with which the speaker was indicating to Harry the insect in question.

And it was Fred Flye again!

He was flying in tight spirals above the center of the crowd, and his light was flashing in never-ending signals. Unreality returned as I read the message.

"LW—LW—LW."

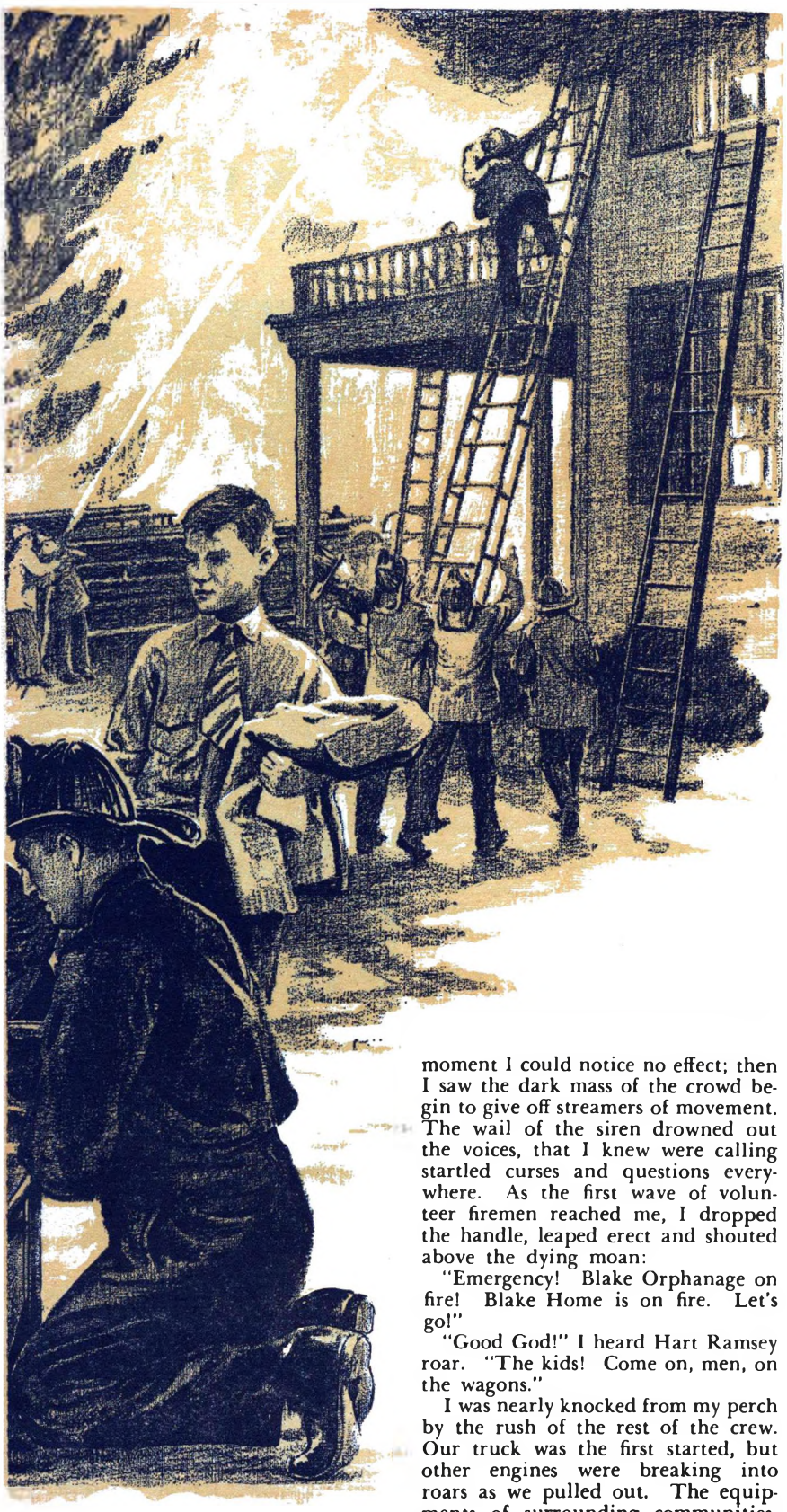
LW. *Lang Williams.* He was calling me. Anne had noticed nothing. I left her, wormed through the crowd, ran for my car, and returned with my flashlight. Freddy Flye was still there signaling. I gave him one long flash. Immediately he broke off the call, and went into a longer message.

"Urgent. Blake Home on fire. On fire. Hurry. Hurry."

Doubt of the message never touched me, nor even doubt of my own sanity. I saw momentarily that high, fire-escapeless pile of tinder-dry wood, with its hundred sleeping children and great flames waving in the gusty wind. The rows of fire trucks stood nearby where they had been parked after the various exhibitions and drills of the afternoon. I knew that our ladder truck had a hand siren. I ran to the truck, climbed to the seat, grabbed the handle and turned with all my strength.

The scream of the siren grew to strength beneath my hands. For a

Illustrated by CHARLES CHICKERING



Every child was saved, by the time the building ccollapsed.

moment I could notice no effect; then I saw the dark mass of the crowd begin to give off streamers of movement. The wail of the siren drowned out the voices, that I knew were calling startled curses and questions everywhere. As the first wave of volunteer firemen reached me, I dropped the handle, leaped erect and shouted above the dying moan:

"Emergency! Blake Orphanage on fire! Blake Home is on fire. Let's go!"

"Good God!" I heard Hart Ramsey roar. "The kids! Come on, men, on the wagons."

I was nearly knocked from my perch by the rush of the rest of the crew. Our truck was the first started, but other engines were breaking into roars as we pulled out. The equipments of surrounding communities, come to participate in the fair, joined the mission. Our engine headed the rush down the dark and silent pike. The white fence posts streamed by, our siren split the night and white dust billowed up behind us, enveloping the following trucks.

And it was only then that doubt entered my soul.

Suppose I was crazy? Suppose I had only imagined everything? What if we arrived at the Home, and found everything serene and quiet?

I might escape public disgrace by saying some other unrecognized man had given me the alarm, but in my own heart I would know that I was crazy. No man's mind is proof against that dark knowledge; imagined fireflies might turn to God knows what images of horror. I could see padded cells, straitjackets, a life of haunted dreams.

Ramsey, beside me on the seat, leaned close to my ear.

"Hey, Lang!" he shouted above the rush of wind and the noise of the siren. "Where'd you get the word? Who told you?"

There it was! I'd best begin the lie right now; it might soon be my only shelter.

'Some man ran up to me and told me. I smelled whisky on him; maybe he was drunk, but I couldn't take a chance. Think of those kids in that firetrap!"

I heard him swear.

"They'll laugh us out o' the country if nothin's wrong, Lang!" he answered after a moment. "But never mind, boy. You did right. I got two kids myself."

We rounded the last curve. There before us, high, silent and dark behind its trees was the Blake Home, only a few scattered lights showing here and there in the quarters of the meager staff.

Black—silent—peaceful.

I HUNCHED within my coat. Bleak despair filled me. I heard Ramsey curse again. Sirens moaned to a stop; trucks drew up; men leaped down to stand silent for a moment. Then curses and finally laughter, but gruff, angry laughter, arose in the air. The men from other communities were those who laughed. Anger began to surge through the crowd.

"Who passed that alarm?" I heard a voice ask.

I didn't hear the answer, but men moved away from me, leaving me standing alone for a moment, feeling already the cold dreary loneliness of the mad.

Lights began to flash on here and there in the building as people came awake from the noise; somebody nearby said:

"Well, looks like we're sold. Might as well get back. But by God, a man

who'd pull a joke like that oughta get a taste o' the rail!"

Somebody else was muttering; "Maybe he will!" when suddenly a new voice broke in:

"Wait a minute. I smell smoke. Wait a minute. Wait—"

"Chee-rist! Lookit that! Lookit that!"

An entire portion of the roof suddenly caved in, and great flames broke loose to roar high into the windy night!

I wouldn't want to buy my sanity at the cost of a single burned child, but I must admit that for a moment relief as warm as sunshine poured through me! The roar of the flames was drowned in the shout of the crowd, and then within two minutes there was a ladder at every window, and nearly as many firemen in that building as there were children.

Blake Home burned like a heap of excelsior, but with the men and the equipment we had, every child and every attendant was not only quickly saved without any harm, but even the personal belongings of the children were brought out. Pitifully meager little heaps they made, too, standing in the firelit background by their weeping or excited owners. By the time the building collapsed with a final inferno of flame, with everyone safe, there was a crowd of thousands there.

It was the work of only a few minutes to parcel all of the children out among the members of that crowd. Afterward, no less than fourteen of those temporary relationships were made permanent through adoption, and the town at once commenced plans for a fine new orphanage.

I WAS the hero of the night. The secondary hero, the man who had told me, was, as may be guessed, never found. I was in something of a quandary. I wanted Flye to have the credit he deserved, but I didn't want to occupy that padded cell! So I let things rest. I vowed to myself that I would do everything possible to find Frederick Flye and remove him to a safe place. I felt that the town and I owed him at least that much.

But I never saw him again, at least not as a firefly. For a long time I watched every lightning bug I saw, hoping to see the cadenced flashes. But after my son was born, eight months later, I knew the firefly would never come again. My wife never did know why I fainted dead away the first time I started to bathe young Lang, the day we brought him home. It was the first time I'd seen him without his shirt on.

On his chest, just over the heart, was the reddish-brown, virtually perfect silhouette of a flying seagull.

STORIES OF

Johnny Reb's

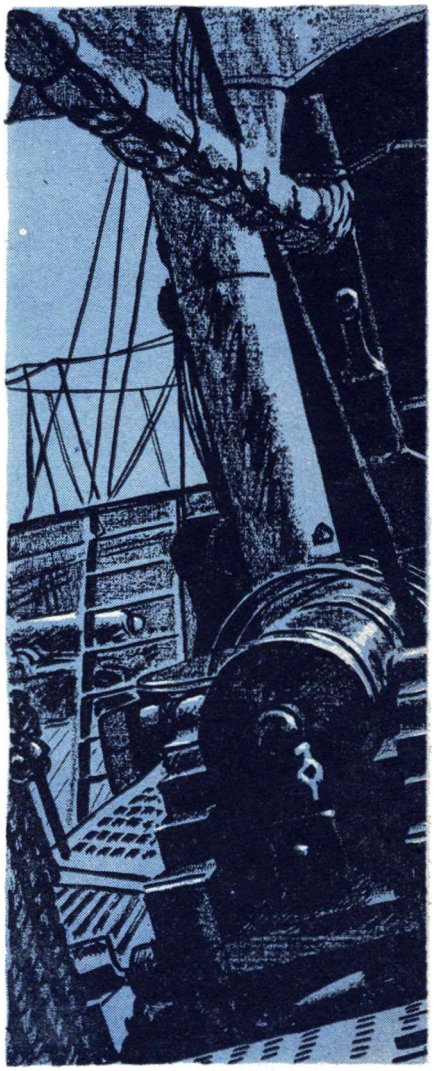
AT first the watch on the *New Ironsides* thought it was a rowboat coming from seaward. Visibility was poor, it being nine o'clock at night, and hazy. Then someone caught the faint flare of smoke puffing through a short stack. The officer of the deck, Ensign Charles W. Howard, went up on the rail to get a better look. He hailed, repeated his call three times—getting no reply. Then the thing came boiling toward them. Too close and too late to depress a broadside gun, Howard ordered his sentries to open fire with their rifles. From fifty yards the thing answered with a shotgun blast—certainly not a naval weapon. Ensign Howard toppled back from the rail and fell to the deck. There was a muffled explosion below the waterline on the starboard quarter close to the stern. A great geyser of water shot up.

The *New Ironsides,* sturdiest ship in the Union blockading squadron, had been torpedoed!

Torpedoed by something that seemed to go *under* the water instead of on top, as a proper boat should.

IT was the night of October 5th, 1863, and the *New Ironsides* was off Morris Island just outside Charleston harbor. Some miles away, in the shelter of a creek, Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren, commanding the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron and aboard the flag steamer *Philadelphia,* was preparing for bed. It was almost ten o'clock when his signal officer brought him a message relayed by Army telegraph that there was heavy firing among the ships stationed at the harbor mouth.

Dahlgren was fifty-three, young for his rank, a craggy, mustached Swede world-famous as a scientist as well as an admiral and fighter for a modern navy. He ordered the *Philadelphia* under way, but the tide was too low to get her out. There was no further signal, no firing that could be heard, and no one could tell him anything of what was happening. He could do nothing until the tide built up and freed the *Philadelphia* from the inlet. He did not get to the scene until late that night.



There was a muffled explo-

Meanwhile the *Ironsides* had pulled two Confederates out of the water. One of them, a seaman named James Sullivan found clinging to the *Ironsides'* anchor chain, was frightened and willing to talk. The attacking torpedo boat, he said, was the *David.*

Next morning Dahlgren quizzed Sullivan carefully and then wrote in his diary: *"The vessel was about fifty feet long, made like a cigar, five to six*

Submarines

THE SOUTH SHOWED GREAT COURAGE AND INGENUITY IN DEVELOPING UNDERWATER CRAFT TO COMBAT THE NORTHERN BLOCKADE.

by MAJOR EDWIN SIMMONS

sion, water shot up. The New Ironsides, *the sturdiest ship in the Union blockading squadron, had been torpedoed.*

feet in diameter, with an engine which would drive her eight to ten knots. At the bow was a bar ten feet long, with a torpedo at the end holding sixty pounds of powder, with four nipples to act by percussion. There were four persons in the boat, and they stood on the bottom with their heads out of the hatch, which was made in the part out of water. They left Charleston at dusk, passed our vessels in the dark, then returned and attacked the Ironsides. *He could not tell whether the captain or the pilot fired at and wounded the officer of the deck. The immense column of water that came down put out the fires of the* David."

The second prisoner was less cooperative, but there were four damning papers on him. They identified him as Lieutenant William T. Glassell, Confederate States Navy. One ordered him down from Wilmington to report to Flag-Officer John R. Tucker for duty. The second assigned him "for special service against the fleet of the United States off this harbor." The third modified these orders, and the fourth gave him command of the torpedo steamer *David* with instructions to destroy "as many of the enemy's vessels as possible."

Glassell would admit only that he and his crew had abandoned the *David* when it was swamped. He had a life-preserver and was picked up by a Union coal schooner. Someone remembered that Glassell had been a lieutenant in the U. S. Navy before the war.

Captain Stephen C. Rowan of the *New Ironsides* reported that the *David* had been taken under fire by the guns of the squadron as it drifted past. It had disappeared and was presumed sunk.

DAHLGREN was a naval ordnanceman—one of the best. His bottle-shaped guns were then standard with the Navy. The present day naval proving-ground in Virginia bears his name.

"If sixty pounds of powder, why not six hundred?" he wrote in a confidential report to Gustavus Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy. And then working backward from the piecemeal information he had, he roughed out the design of the *David* and calculated its dimensions and performance. These plans went along to the assistant secretary with this endorsement: "By all means let us have a quantity of these torpedoes *(sic)*, and thus turn them against the enemy. We can make them faster than they can."

(There is considerable confusion as to the use of "torpedoes" in the Civil War and this comes from the change in the definition of the word. When Farragut "damned the torpedoes" at Mobile Bay he was defying what we would now call a field of naval mines. This type of harbor defense was used ingeniously by the South in many different ways. Some "torpedoes" were floating mines; some were fixed at an angle to the bottom; they had a variety of names: *boom, boiler,* and *barrel* for a few, and were detonated either by percussion or electrically.

(Later, both sides began to think of ways of projecting or propelling these "torpedoes," and then came the evolution of the *ram* or *spar* torpedo which is somewhat like the modern article—at least in purpose. The word "torpedo" seems to have been first used by Robert Fulton during his experiments at the beginning of the 1800's, because he fancied the weapon resembled in principle the electric catfish of that name. The name "submarine mines" does not appear officially until 1866. The Whitehead torpedo, which was the prototype of present self-propelled torpedoes, was developed by an Englishman of that name in 1864.)

Captain Rowan recommended Ensign Howard for promotion to acting master for his conspicuous gallantry during the attack. Dahlgren granted the promotion, but soberly recorded in his diary four days later on the 10th of October that *"a Higher Power has given him a better promotion."* Dahlgren was tempted to hang Glassell for murder. Instead he sent him off in a tug, on October 12, to Fortress Monroe with a request to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles that he not be exchanged "until some time has elapsed, as he could not fail to be of great service to the enemy in future operations of the same kind."

No one had thought a mere sixty pounds of rifle powder could much hurt the *New Ironsides.* After all, she was a big ship, a 3,486-ton wood-built screw-driven steam frigate with twenty big guns—fourteen of them eleven-inch Dahlgrens—enclosed in a heavy iron battery box. During the war she fired more shot and absorbed more of a pounding than any other American ship. Her commander shrugged off the attack but six weeks later she was still leaking badly; Dahlgren ordered a detailed damage report. Captain Rowan had the coal pulled out of her bunkers and sent his warrant carpenter down to sound the timbers. Carpenter Bishop's report was not reassuring. The torpedo had exploded three feet under the water line where there was four and one-half inches of armor and twenty-seven inches of wood backing. The *New Ironsides* was sprung all out of line and had to be ordered to a Navy yard for a major overhaul.

Meanwhile the *David* was not on the bottom of the harbor as the Federals hoped, but safe in Charleston.

The four-man crew thought her swamped when the column of water thrown up by the torpedo flooded through the *David's* short stack, putting out her fires. They went over the side but whereas Glassell and Sullivan swam away, Acting First Assistant Engineer James H. Tomb went back after the debris settled, to find Pilot Walker Cannon, who couldn't swim, clinging to the little steamer.

Tomb hauled Cannon aboard. Together they managed to get the fires going. Her engine was much cut up by a piece of iron ballast shaken loose by the explosion but they got her under way and limped through the Union squadron to reach Charleston the next morning with no more damage than thirteen bullet-holes and a chewed-up engine.

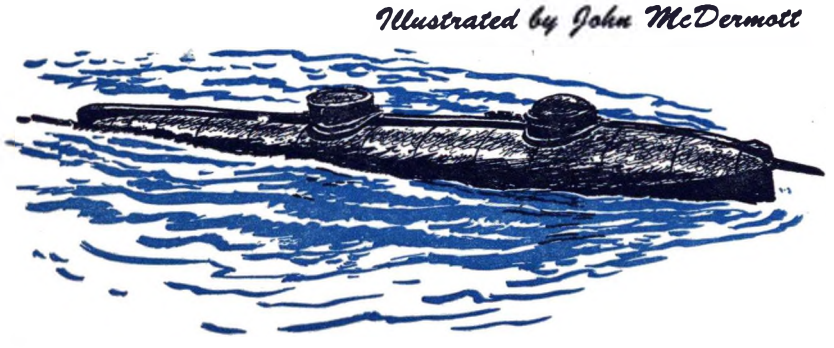
The next day Tomb made his written report to Flag-Officer Tucker who endorsed it along to General Gustave T. Beauregard who commanded the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Tomb called the *David* a "propeller" and also "a small submerged steamer." Every other detail of his report corroborated Dahlgren's deductions except the charge of powder in the copper torpedo was set down as seventy pounds.

THE torpedo service had been legalized in October, 1862, by the Confederate Congress and Major Francis D. Lee was placed in charge of operations at Charleston. He had done an amazing amount of improvisation including the invention of a spar torpedo. The first *David* was built privately at the expense of Theodore Stoney, a patriotic gentleman of the city. It was not a true submarine in that its smokestack and hatch coaming remained above the surface, but its degree of submergence could be regulated with water ballast and it looked very much like a modern submarine proceeding along with its decks just awash.

But down in Mobile, Alabama, there was a man named Horace L. Hunley experimenting with a device he called the *American Diver.* It was really the third *Diver.* The first he had built in New Orleans and had to scuttle off Spanish Fort when the Yankees occupied the city in 1862. The second had foundered off Fort Morgan while under tow.

The third, shaped like a fish, was twenty feet long, three and one half feet wide, five feet deep, and made of galvanized boiler iron. Instead of a steam engine, seven or eight men sat facing each other and turned an

Illustrated by John McDermott



Crosby was apprehensive when he sighted what looked like a floating log.

eccentric shaft which worked the screw. Two water-tight manholes opened onto the deck; and along the sides, well forward, was a pair of diving fins. The little craft could make three knots—and some optimistically said it could do five.

They called it a "fish torpedo boat" and the theory was that it could dive under a Union ship while towing a floating torpedo.

With Dahlgren's squadron hammering at Charleston during that summer of 1863, they had packed the *American Diver* on two flat cars and shipped it to South Carolina. They tested her; and General Beauregard was much impressed.

But a little later the boat was proceeding along Cooper River, decks awash, hatches open, when the swell of a passing paddle-wheel steamer swamped her. Eight men drowned; only the officer in charge, a Lieutenant Payne, CSN, escaped. This was but the first of six fatal accidents. The *Diver* was raised. A few days later, hatches again open, she sank in a squall. This time Payne and most of the others escaped but several drowned. Raised again, they moored it to Fort Sumter's wharf. The deadly little ship rolled over and sank. Only the unsinkable Payne and two others escaped.

Payne properly declared that he had had enough. They raised the *Diver* and sent for Horace L. Hunley.

Hunley came from Mobile and brought along a young lieutenant, George E. Dixon, Company E, 21st Alabama Volunteers, invalided home after being wounded at Shiloh. The Confederates were still hopeful; in their dispatches they were beginning to call the boat a "submarine."

On the 15th of October, ten days after the *David* attacked the *Ironsides*, Captain Hunley and a crew of seven took the *Diver* out while Dixon and Assistant Engineer Tomb watched from the wharf. She cast off at 9:25 A.M., went down at 9:35 and didn't come up. A diver found her with her nose stuck in the mud three days later. The crew was dead of suffocation, "contorted into all kinds of horrible attitudes, some clutching candles, evidently endeavoring to force open manholes; others lying in the bottom, tightly grappled together, and the blackened faces of all presented the expression of their despair and agony."

It wasn't pleasant and it wasn't profitable. Amazingly enough, there was still a sufficiency of volunteers. Another crew took her out, tried to dive under the receiving ship *Indian Queen*, and were caught in the anchor cable. All seven men drowned. Thus about thirty-five Confederates had

***All seven were drowned, making 35 Confederates who'd died in the* Diver.**

died in the *Diver*. General Beauregard put his foot down: no more diving the *American Diver*—now called the *H. L. Hunley* in dubious compliment to its late designer.

Well, Dixon and Tomb had other ideas about how the *H. L. Hunley* could be used. They tried towing her with the original *David*, a sort of tandem arrangement with the *Hunley* in turn towing its torpedo. Then one night the warhead caught on the bottom and nearly blew up both the torpedo boats before they could work it loose. After that Flag Officer Tucker said there would be no more towing the *Hunley* with the *David*.

So the *Hunley* was moored at Battery Marshall at the east end of Sullivan's Island. Every night the U. S. screw sloop *Housatonic*, thirteen guns and 160 men, would take its blockading position off Battery Marshall. The *Housatonic* was a thin-sided two-thousand-tonner—very tempting.

Early the evening of February 17, 1864, the *Hunley* cast off her lines and headed seaward. At her bow was a torpedo rigged to a spar. She had strict orders not to dive.

ABOARD the *Housatonic* all was quiet. The sea was smooth; the moon was shining, and the sloop swung easily at anchor. On deck was Acting Master John K. Crosby, a good and cautious officer well indoctrinated in the dangers of torpedoes because all winter long Admiral Dahlgren had been racking his fertile brain for defenses against the new attack. He had issued printed orders that all blockading ships should put out a screen of picket boats after dark, had provided for calcium illumination, and he and his engineers had devised an ingenious variety of booms and nets to fend off the torpedo boats. Also, believing, like a good admiral, that the best defense is a good offense, he had bombarded the Navy Department with requests and specifications for similar torpedo craft. Nor was he ignorant of what the Confederates were doing. His best source of information was deserters from the Charleston naval defenses and while their reports were garbled and exaggerated he knew that the original *David* was intact, that other "Davids"—as they were now calling all torpedo boats—were built or building, and he knew about the curious and fatal experiments with the *H. L. Hunley*.

So at eight-forty-five, the evening of February 17th, Acting Master Crosby was a little apprehensive when he sighted what looked like a floating plank or log a hundred yards off. He sounded general quarters. Captain Charles W. Pickering and the ship's exec, Lieutenant Francis J. Higginson burst out onto the deck and emptied their pistols at the *Hunley*. That was all there was time to do. There was a whooshing explosion between the main and mizzen mast, and the *Housatonic* went down like a lead sinker. Her crew managed to put only two boats over the side. The rest of the survivors scrambled up the masts which stuck up from the shallow water like three sadly festooned Christmas trees. The U.S.S. *Canandaigua* rescued most of the crew. An ensign and four men were lost and Captain Pickering was wounded.

But the celebration in Charleston was muted because the *H. L. Hunley* had gone down too, this time for the last time. After the war, they found her on the harbor bottom, bow pointing toward the hulk of the *Housatonic* one hundred feet away. Aboard, still at their ghostly posts, were Lieutenant Dixon and his six gallant volunteers.

The sinking of the *Housatonic* was about the end of the Charleston torpedo-boat activities although the Confederates continued to experiment. Lieut. Glassell was exchanged (against Dahlgren's recommendation), promoted to full commander, and came back to direct the experiments, along with the indestructible Tomb—now a chief engineer.

When Dahlgren occupied Charleston in February, 1865, he found three torpedo boats sunk or scuttled in Cooper River; six others were on the ways, either under repair or being completed; and two were ready for service. They were of the "David" type, 54 feet long and 5½ feet in diameter. A supply of an improved type of torpedo—perhaps the type used in sinking the *Housatonic*—was also found. They were copper cylinders ten inches in diameter, thirty-two inches long, loaded with 134 pounds of powder, and fitted with eight fuses.

THE Confederates had evolved a new and successful pattern of naval attack but they knew the weakness of their machinery. Brave men accept risks but only fanatics man suicide-boats and by 1864 faith—or at least hope—in the Cause was faltering. The *H. L. Hunley* was a big step toward a true submersible but it did not solve the problem of propulsion and ventilation. The *David* met the problem partially by keeping its hatch and stack above water—the only possible solution for a steam-driven boat—and of course it was not a submarine at all although its design was remarkably prophetic.

The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official attitude of the Navy Department.

EDWIN SIMMONS

Along with the great and important inventions developed in the war were many others worth remembering if only for laughs.

by IB MELCHIOR and WILL SPARKS

The

D-DAY — H-Hour — Normandy. . . . Grinding, roaring, grating, the giant ice barges hit the beach and disgorge their loads of infantry. . . . Yanking from their nostrils the rubber tubes of their pedal calorenticators, the G.I.s come splashing ashore. . . . In the battle haze overhead the Kauch fighter planes thunder, chewing enemy aircraft to bits with their razor-sharp steel teeth. . . . From bombers high above, black clouds of Mexican bats wing their way inland on their satanic mission of fiery destruction. . . . Down on the beaches the titanic outrigger tanks are moving in, all fourteen guns blazing over the heads of the advancing infantry, while off to the right a slingshot squad can be seen dropping down on their backs, feet to the enemy, grenade slings swung into position. . . . The invasion battle is on."

What's that? You were there? That's not the way *you* saw it? Well, brother, you were closer to seeing this than you think!

Those ice barges, for instance, were the brain child of none other than the famed Commando Chief, Lord Louis Mountbatten. Landing barges cast in ice from giant molds, sure to hold up in the frigid Channel waters even

Pedal calorenticator.

War You Never Saw

in June. Cheap to make, unlimited material; and those rusty iron hulks which still clutter the Normandy beaches would long ago have melted away in the warm summer sun. But Lord Louis' idea didn't make the grade—quite—in spite of the fact that the resilient ice actually would have made better armor than steel. No one is saying why the idea was dropped. Too fantastic? Figure it out yourself—you almost rode in one.

And in case you are wondering what in tarnation is a pedal calorenticator, the U. S. Patent Office has complete blueprints among its more than two and one-half million patents granted since 1790. It is a device for warming the cold feet of an infantry soldier. To work it, you simply insert one end of a pair of special rubber tubes in your nostrils, the other ends in your shoes. All you've got to do to warm your toes is exhale deeply.

INVENTIONS, screwy or otherwise (and sometimes it's hard to be sure) were a top priority item throughout the war. Between Pearl Harbor and VJ-Day the Government spent some four hundred million dollars encouraging the development of wartime inventions—including, inevitably, pedal calorenticators, grenade slings, and fighter planes with teeth. The inventors delivered in fantastic quantity and with astounding quality, and undoubtedly saved thousands of G.I. lives. But the mortality on ideas was high. When an inspired inventor jumped from his bathtub shouting "Eureka!" his chances were one in three of having thought up a new war gadget; but his chances of seeing his new secret weapon go into battle action were only one in 8,429. It seems a shame about some of those also-rans. They would have made it a mighty peculiar war.

Take that fighter-plane with teeth that work. A crackpot idea? Well, every man to his opinion; but anyhow it was invented—and later patented—by one of the brigadier generals of the United States Air Force. He got his inspiration from the sharks' teeth painted on the P-40's of the Flying Tigers in China. The General's plane had a retractable saw tooth steel bar which could be thrust out below the wings to cut an enemy plane to pieces. But it went the way of Mountbatten's ice barges and the cozy pedal calorenticators.

ONE inventor who came very close indeed was the man with the idea of the incendiary bats—a Pennsylvania doctor. Right after Pearl Harbor, the doctor arrived in Washington, D. C., with a weird idea. He proposed to burn down the flimsy bamboo buildings of Japan with swarms of bomb-carrying Mexican bats—the species best adapted to carrying a load.

According to his plan the bats would be placed in refrigerated cans which would keep them dormant until the containers, set to open at a low altitude, were dropped by high-flying bombers over a Jap town. Attached to each bat was to be a one-ounce time bomb, capable of burning eight minutes with a twenty-two-inch flame. The bats would crawl into nooks and crannies under the roofs of buildings—and a few minutes later burn the town to the ground.

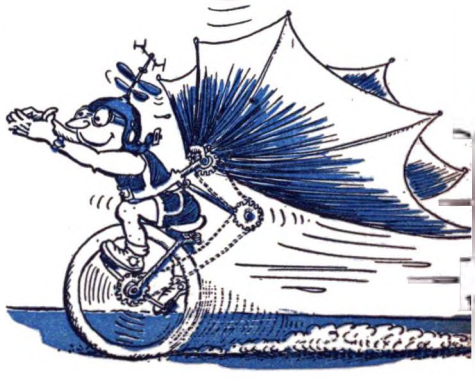
The idea fascinated everybody from the President on down, and "Operation X-ray" came into being on direct orders from the White House. Several million bats were collected from natural caves throughout the country, and two million dollars' worth of experiments were run before the project was abandoned late in 1943—perhaps because something even *more* effective was going to be dropped on Japan.

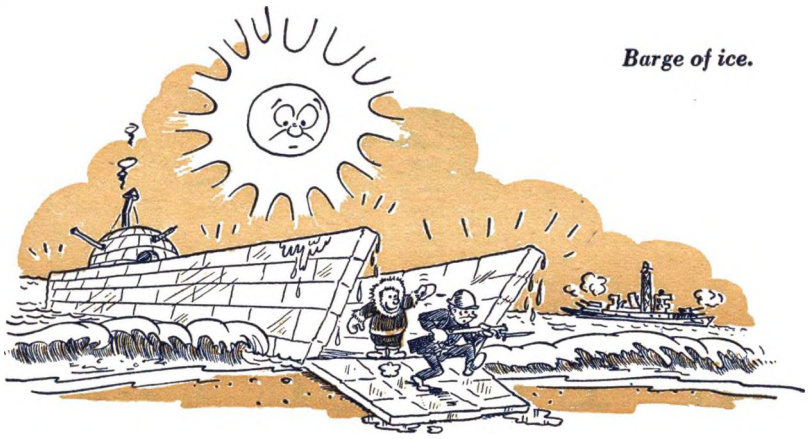
Batty idea? Wouldn't have worked? Tell that to the Air Force. During tests at Carlsbad, New Mexico, the experimenters had the misfortune to let a few of the "loaded" bats escape. Only a handful—but a few hours later part of the air base wasn't there any more!

That outrigger tank throwing shells on the Normandy beaches was another good idea—in a way. Ten revolving turrets mounted on long booms stretching out from the central tank and supported by huge wheels, made it a rolling fortress packing more wallop than a whole battery of artillery. The flaw was, of course, that one direct hit by an enemy shell would be wiping out the equivalent of an entire artillery battery too.

The outrigger tank would have been a weapon to gladden the small fry, who turned out scores of suggestions of their own during the war, many of them remarkably like inventions which saw actual combat. Like the idea thought up by two young boys of Scotland, Pa. Their invention was a tank with "sucktion *(sic)* cups on the belt so that tanks could climb walls or steep mountains." It would bo good if it worked, they said modestly.

Geflopagus giganticus.





Barge of ice.

These youngsters, like thousands of other junior Edisons, fought the war shoulder to shoulder with *Captain Midnight,* a comic-book character who ran an invention page and rewarded his comrades with a "patent card" for every good idea they sent in.

A lot of those ideas were not nearly as childish as you might think. Right from the beginning, for example, Captain Midnight fans were writing in by the hundreds demanding that something be done to "save our pilots" by putting "parshutes on wings of planes, so hurt planes can land." It was no surprise to them when early in 1944 General "Hap" Arnold officially commended Lt. Charles F. Pratte for the unique trick of landing a four-engined bomber without brakes on a Tarawa airstrip by opening three parachutes over the crippled craft. This, of course, today is a standard braking device on certain jet planes with high landing speed.

A BIG proportion of the juvenile inventors went in for flight, this being an air age: They put wings on everything from G.I.s to battleships. A boy in Charleston, Oregon, had an "autogiro for carrying artillery from one place to another," while a youngster in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and another from McMinnville, Tennessee, each came up with a rotor-powered tank able to buzz stealthily over the enemy's head and attack from the rear.

Then there was a bullet-proof paint for bombers—the formula was unfortunately a little vague—and a plane made of transparent plastic "so the light goes through"—making it invisible. One lad had a "special water harder" to be poured out of a bomb-bay, thus forming an instantaneous landing field of solid ice on the water. This was going one better than an actually patented adult invention, a landing platform for naval planes to be rolled out on the water from a ship's side like a floating carpet. There was also a mysterious fluid to be sprayed on large clouds to harden *them* for emergency landings, but the young inventor neglected to include a plan for holding up the cloud.

The kids were thorough, if nothing else. They had a brand-new use for practically everything. Handy for paratroops was a parachute with folding wooden struts—it automatically became a tent on landing. Tar and syrup shot from a spray gun would "make enemy tanks sticky and stop them." Even trees were pressed into service. There was "a bullet-prove tree that lets bombs out when a man touches a butten," and an imaginative boy of Lima, Ohio, presented detailed drawings of "the machine gun hidden beneath palm trees to surprise the enemy." This particular palm tree grew a special kind of banana—"when unpelled they are bullets."

A six-year-old Rochester, New York, lad developed plans for a mechanical tree designed to lure Jap snipers into its lush foliage—and then to squeeze them to death with its octopus-like mechanical arms.

But perhaps the biggest scoop of the war was scored by a girl of El Campo, Texas, and a boy from Colorado, each of whom sent to Captain Midnight "plans" for a long-distance, rocket-driven bomb and a bomb shaped like a small plane that could travel under its own power—months before the first German buzz bombs fell on London.

Most adult inventors of war gadgets, however, did not submit their brain children through Captain Midnight of the comic books, but used the National Inventors Council in Washington, D. C. Founded in the summer of 1940 by Lawrence Lagner—still secretary of the organization as well as one of the two directors of the Theatre Guild, and one of the world's top patent attorneys—the Council is still receiving inventions for national defense.

"We decided to form the Council," says Mr. Lagner, "when inventors in Washington were queueing up like a ticket-line for 'South Pacific.'"

Impressed by the sincerity and integrity of the contributing inventors, Mr. Lagner recalls the young man who invented the land-mine detector, which was to become of such tremendous value. He was paid $50,000 for all rights to the invention—a mere drop in the ocean against what he would have earned in a royalty deal.

"Why not make a claim?" suggested Mr. Lagner, when the young inventor was in his office one day.

The man was indignant. "Never," he said. "That was my deal and I stick by it. If my invention will help save American lives, what more can I ask?"

TO illustrate the wide variety of devices submitted to the Council—which has screened some three hundred thousand inventions since it was founded ten years ago—it reports that one of the ideas accepted was the electric firing device for the rocket bazooka, while another was a simple signaling mirror for saving men adrift at sea. This mirror, which is now standard equipment on all life-rafts and boats, has two fine crossed lines which enables a man to aim his distress signal at a distant ship or plane.

Many of the inventions submitted were remarkably simple and yet embodied a good idea. How about patent No. 2,567,249—the contribution of a Californian inventor—those grenade slingshots, for instance?

Designed to save your pitching arm and give you greater throwing range while not exposing your body to the enemy the slingshot consists simply of a strong rubber belt.

If a well-placed hand grenade is called for, you lie down on your back,

Grenade-launcher.

feet pointing toward the enemy. Then you slip the looped ends of your rubber belt around your feet, stretch it as far as you can, up to your chest, place a grenade in the sling, aim, and let go. Simple, isn't it?

But sometimes the new weapons were a little more complicated. Like the special bullet for shooting holes in a so-called bullet-proof gas tank. You see, someone invented a gas tank with a rubber lining which immediately closed and sealed holes made by just ordinary bullets. So, naturally, a bullet-proof gas-tank-piercing *bullet* had to be invented. It consists of a projectile with a loose metal jacket which is supposed to get stuck in the tank's rubber lining, keeping the holes open.

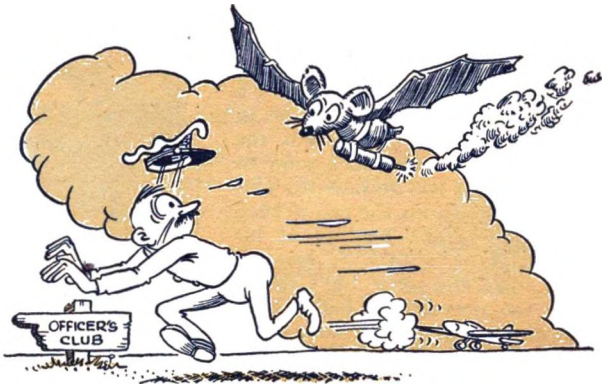
Of course, in this never-ending race between armor and bullets someone is bound to invent a bullet-proof gas-tank-piercing bullet-proof *gas tank!*

Maybe the man to do it is a certain inventor and editor widely famed

Buzz bomb.

in American inventing circles as a veritable mine of wacky ideas. This inventor has more than 80 patents to his credit—none of which has ever been known to be of any use to anybody, his admirers proudly maintain. Among his wartime suggestions were a flying tank which shed its wings when landing, a radio-controlled vehicle for exploding land-mines—and a mechanical assembly line for converting civilians into draftees, untouched by human hands!

MECHANICAL induction centers, ice invasion barges, pedal calorenticators, biting fighter planes, incendiary bats, grenade slingshots—you missed them by the hair of a raised eyebrow. To say nothing of jumping out of a plane with a paper parachute—an invention actually used with loads up to fifty pounds—or with nothing to hold you up but a long silk ribbon, like a spider; marching ashore along the sea bottom with artificial lungs; or zooming over enemy lines on huge batlike wings.



Incendiary bats.

And even these contraptions look simple compared to some of the gadgets the boys are working on today.

Ready for action is the talking light—an invisible light-beam with a voice, developed by a couple of Chicago professors.

According to one of these, "the system employs a gas discharge light source which can be varied electrically to carry the voice communication. One source employed in the transmitter is the caesium vapor arc-lamp operating in an atmosphere of argon gas. The resonance light from the lamp is similar to that emitted by yellow sodium vapor lamps used for street lighting, except that the caesium vapor arc-light is just beyond the visible range in the near infra-red region." In other words it looks just like the yellow street lights on modern highways—only you can't see it!

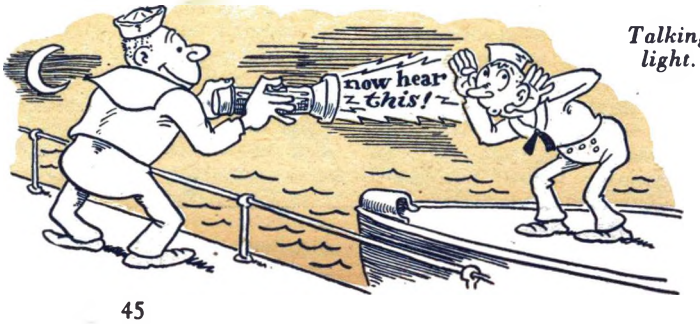
FOR ship-to-shore contact transceivers will be gyroscopically controlled to keep them steady and aimed at the other transceiver, even when the ship rolls with the waves. Ship to ship; air to ground; the new system may replace walkie-talkie radio. Communications will never again become jammed as they did at Normandy.

Field commanders of the future won't get a thirty-six-word carrier-pigeon message from Headquarters—they'll get thirty-six *thousand* words recorded on sound film so thin that a single bird can carry two hours worth of dictation. But there's *one* compensation, at least. When you've heard what the brass has to say, you can *eat* the message! Invented by the Army Signal Corps the film is edible—of course, for quick disposal in case of imminent capture.

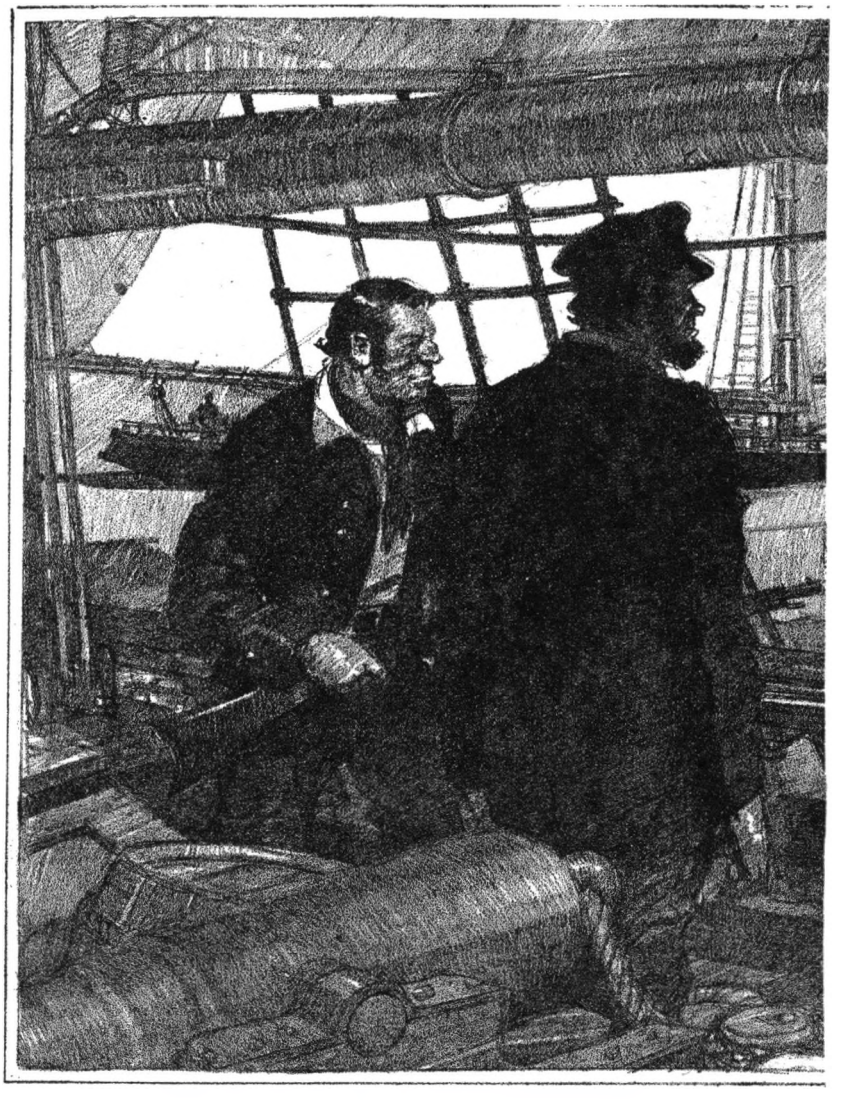
AND out in Arizona, not far from Superstition Mountain, an inventor is hard at work on the weirdest airplane yet, the ornithopter. In case you don't have a dictionary handy, an ornithopter is a plane with wings that *flap*. The ornithopter's inventor is the man who designed the Ford tri-motor transport, and he is a one-time consultant for Consolidated Vultee Aircraft, Packard Motors, and other large concerns. He has built himself an experimental apparatus—the "Geflopagus Giganticus"—which enables him to test his wing designs by flapping them at practically any speed. He is also studying special high-speed motion pictures of insects such as the bumblebee. Since the bumblebee's wings flap 18,000 times a minute, the ornithopter ought to be quite a plane!

Sounds crazy? Impractical? A bunch of crackpots? Well, what about the guy who said he was going to invent a device to take a man out of a moving airplane at any height and deposit him safely on the ground? Or the guy who was going to make a heavy armor-piercing cannon so light you could carry it on your back? Or the fellow who was going to capture that gas which follows a bullet out of a rifle and use it over again?

They came up with the parachute, the bazooka, and the M-1 rifle!



Talking light.



The LAST

ON a tranquil Sunday afternoon in late August, 1832, a brig was lying by her pier in Salem, Mass. She was the *Mexican,* a coastwise trader soon to weigh anchor for Rio de Janeiro. Her captain leaned against the rail to keep a sharp eye on the loading of his cargo.

It was a peaceful scene, but Captain Butman was nervous: he had premonitions of disaster. The nature of his cargo was partly responsible for Captain Butman's fears. Aside from a small quantity of tea and saltpeter, it consisted entirely of specie: twenty thousand dollars in silver. And the *Mexican's* course lay through waters that had been notorious for piracy for two centuries. So Captain Butman was afraid of pirates.

It was not a logical fear. For the forces of law and order had supposedly driven pirates from American waters. Yet the Captain's forebodings were to be justified: and the *Mexican* became the victim of the last piratical raid to occur in the Atlantic Ocean.

Captain Butman had questioned each man in the crew: was he willing to take the risk? For the most part they laughed at him, but a few shared the Captain's fears. The superstitious noted that the *Mexican* was being loaded on a Sunday, always considered a bad omen. Particularly timorous was the Negro cook. As he was on his way to the ship, a black hen flew up in front of him, flapping her wings and screeching. The cook was sure this meant danger ahead.

The *Mexican* had never carried armament, but Butman was a cautious man. For this voyage, he mounted a pair of brass carronades, and shipped a load of shot for them.

Loading operations proceeded without incident. The tea and saltpeter were placed in the hold, where they took up only a corner of the vast space. The specie was concealed in a hidden runway beneath the floor of the Captain's cabin.

For a month the voyage was entirely routine. By the middle of September, the *Mexican* had passed the Tropic of Cancer and was in the vicinity of the West Indies. Then at two-thirty on the morning of September 20, a strange vessel suddenly materialized out of the darkness and crossed the *Mexican's* stern a half-mile away. She vanished, only to cut across the *Mexican's* bow dangerously close about an hour later. At dawn, the stranger was plainly visible five miles off the weather quarter, running on the same tack as the *Mexican.*

She was a beautiful vessel, a topsail schooner with sleek and graceful lines: long, thin, low in the waist. Her bow was pointed like an arrow and crowned with a figurehead representing the horn of plenty. Her stern was smartly tapered. Her lofty masts were like needles with almost invisible points. She was black all over except for a narrow ribbon of white at the water line. This was a fast, well-handled ship, whose rakish lines made her seem deceptively small.

In some agitation, Captain Butman clambered to the maintop to study this black beauty with his glass. He could see a businesslike brass swivel gun amidships and several fixed cannon to either side. There seemed to be about thirty men on her decks, swarthy fellows, apparently Spaniards and mulattoes. He could make out no name on the vessel; nor was she flying any flag. She had an ominous look to Captain Butman.

"This is the very fellow I have been afraid of," he told his worried men.

Butman ordered the shot brought up from the lockers and his carronades to be made ready. But at this critical juncture he discovered that he had been cheated by some Salem

PIRATE

They still exist in Chinese waters and elsewhere; but the last skull-and-crossbones business near our shores is described in this article . . . by

Charles Knickerbocker

chandler. The shot was too large for the carronades, and his guns were useless. Butman clapped on full sail and made a valiant effort to run, but it was no contest. The *Mexican* was slow and ponderous; the lithe schooner kept abreast of her with ease.

At this point, another vessel appeared on the horizon, and the ominous schooner sheered off to investigate. Butman sighed with relief, but his respite was brief. In a few minutes, the black schooner came about, made straight for the *Mexican*, fired a gun, and ran up the Colombian flag. A hail came in English, asking Butman what his cargo and whither bound. Butman replied that he carried tea and saltpeter for Rio.

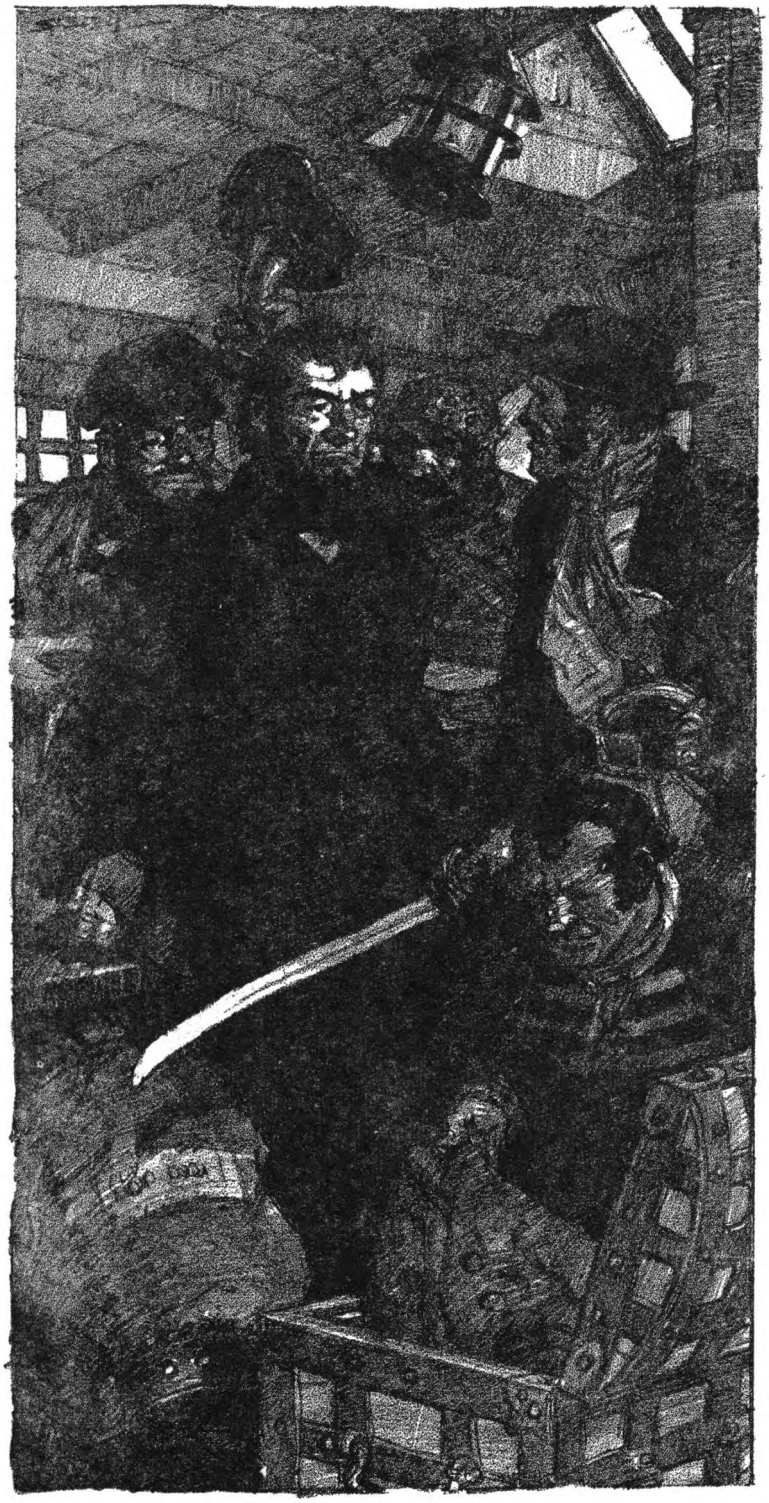
"Come aboard us with your papers," was the command from the schooner.

Butman and four volunteers sadly shook hands with the rest, fearing they might never return, and rowed the longboat over to the black schooner.

When they reached the schooner, five swarthy ruffians armed with pistols and knives leaped into the longboat. They threatened Butman, demanding to know where his money was hid. The brutes exchanged some words in Spanish which Butman could not understand. One of the American sailors did understand, and burst into tears.

One pirate had asked what was to be done with the prisoners; and another, evidently the leader, replied: "Dead cats don't mew. You know what to do with them!"

The longboat was permitted to return to the *Mexican*, followed immediately by a boatload of pirates.



Twenty thousand dollars was not enough! The pirates robbed the men of personal belongings, ransacked the cabin, and beat Butman with the flat of their cutlasses.

The crew of the *Mexican* was ordered to bring out the silver, and this was done. Chests of coin were lifted out of the secret runway and passed into the pirate launch. Twenty thousand dollars was not enough! The pirates robbed Butman and his men of personal belongings, ransacked the great cabin, and believing there was more specie hidden, beat Butman with the flat of cutlasses and battered a speaking-trumpet to bits over his head.

Two of the American sailors neatly hid their belongings from the pirates by slipping the articles into the airspace between the inner and outer sheaths of the hull, where they slid to the keel and were later recovered. Butman himself had several hundred dollars and his navigating instruments concealed in a false bottom of a seachest, and these also escaped detection. But everything else of value was appropriated.

BUTMAN and his crew were forced into the empty hold, and the hatch cover was sealed down tight on top of them. Over their heads, the terrified men could hear the noises of continuing destruction as the pirates stripped the rigging. At last silence fell, broken only by the ripple of waves against the hull. The men remained in the stifling blackness for over an hour before it was discovered that a small scuttleway leading into the cabin had not been closed. Cautiously, Captain Butman eased himself through the tiny opening and looked about him. There were no pirates in sight.

Butman tiptoed out on deck. The pirates had departed. The rakish black schooner was some distance off, streaking for the horizon. As for the *Mexican,* she was a welter of wreckage: masts, spars, canvas, rigging lay in a tangled mess on her decks. From the after cabin clouds of heavy black smoke were billowing into the air—the pirates had gathered tar and other combustibles here and started a fire.

Butman opened the main hatch, and the crew came blinking up into the air. Very wisely, Butman commanded the men not to extinguish the fire until the pirate ship, already hull down in the distance, had disappeared.

Butman and the men labored all night and were able to set up a serviceable jury rig out of the wreckage of masts and sail. Butman saw no point in trying to proceed to Rio without the silver, so he set his course for Salem. Speeded by a fortunate following gale, the *Mexican* reached home in better time than she had made on the outward passage.

Arrival of the plundered ship in Salem set off a wave of popular indignation throughout the nation.

This wanton pillage, in times of peace, in an era when piracy had supposedly been swept from the sea, was a disgrace to national pride and honor. The Government commissioned a warship to search out and destroy the marauder. The warship combed all likely hiding-places for many months without result before the search had to be abandoned. Navies and coast patrols of the entire civilized world were alerted to watch for a trim black topsail schooner.

A YEAR later, the H.M.S. *Curlew*, a British gunboat under the command of a Captain Trotter, was cruising off the west coast of Africa on routine patrol. Trotter put in at the Isle of Princes, a small Portuguese possession near the Guinea coast, and he learned of a group of Spaniards and half-breeds who had just been on the island, and who had fled at the approach of the *Curlew*. Captain Trotter decided to investigate.

These fugitives were said to have gone up the Nazareth River on the nearby mainland of Africa. Trotter manned three small longboats and went up the river to see. He rounded a bend a short distance up, and there she was: a black topsail schooner with rakish lines. Trotter remembered the *Mexican* incident, and correctly identified the schooner. He approached with the intent of boarding, and as he did so, swarms of Spaniards and mulattoes fled in small canoes like deserting rats. Smoke was pouring from the schooner, but Trotter boarded her, extinguished the blaze, warped the vessel out of the river and anchored her in the bay.

Then Captain Trotter sent an officer ashore to negotiate with the local native chieftain for surrender of the pirates. The officer interviewed an ugly muscular Negro who called himself king of those parts. The interview was fruitless. The chieftain indignantly refused to hand over a single man.

Thereupon, Captain Trotter ordered the *Curlew* to open fire on the town. The ensuing artillery display was spectacular but brief. A spark fell on ammunition on the deck and blew it up. Several sailors were killed. Others, among them Captain Trotter, were hurled rudely into the bay. Trotter swam ashore and was promptly taken prisoner by the natives. It was only after lengthy negotiations, full of references to the wrath of the British fleet, that Trotter was released.

During this undignified incident, the pirates had been able to flee far upstream. Some days later the pinnace and a longboat from the *Curlew* were stocked with provisions, armed with a brass cannon on the bow of each, fitted with awnings to protect against the extreme heat, and sent up the Nazareth in pursuit.

Early one morning the pinnace and longboat set out through the fetid murky water, pushing cautiously along by rotting mangrove roots. Just above where the schooner had lain at anchor was a point of land, and Trotter spied a lone native standing here. The native beckoned in a friendly fashion, and Trotter attempted to land. Fortunately the water was too shallow. As they pushed off again, they saw in the brush an army of ferocious natives who had been lying in ambush.

The boats continued upstream for many hours, seeing no sign of life. Suddenly the river shoaled, and both vessels grounded simultaneously near shore. Trotter applied his glass to his eye and made out a large native settlement just around the next point of land. The British sailors meantime spotted a gigantic boa constrictor slithering through the brush nearby; many of them set off in pursuit of the snake. But Trotter saw a large crowd of natives, armed with spears and lances, congregating on a wide beach just beyond the headland.

Trotter yelled for his snake-hunting crew and in the nick of time they returned. Pinnace and longboat were hastily shoved into deep water as twenty-eight war canoes containing some hundred and fifty shrieking savages bore round the point. In each canoe, a white man was directing the activity.

The British prepared for battle. The protective awnings were pulled down. Each sailor was given a loaded musket and a cutlass; grapeshot was placed in the bow cannon. The war canoes approached speedily, and from

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

Whether Old Stonewall melted before the beauties of Donna de Soto is not recorded. At any rate he issued a pardon for Bernado de Soto.

them there came desultory small-arms fire and an occasional arrow. The British waited without a sound. When the canoes came in range, every musket was fired in a well-directed volley, and the cannon spouted grapeshot. Many of the savages were killed at once; two canoes sank; large numbers of terrified natives jumped into the water only to be consumed by crocodiles; other canoes fled for the sanctuary of the village. Seven war canoes surrendered, yielding one pirate prisoner apiece.

The remnant of the pirate-native contingent reassembled on the shore, but Trotter landed a detachment and drove the fugitives into the hills. Six more pirates were taken captive.

Proudly, Trotter set off downstream with his bag of thirteen prisoners. The culprits were taken to London, extradited, and transported to America for trial.

THE black schooner with the rakish masts and arrow bow was the *Panda*, a slaver from La Coruña, Spain. She was owned by Don Bernado de Soto, a native of La Coruña, who served aboard her as first mate. De Soto was twenty-five years old, a brilliant and talented youth who held a commission as captain in the army of Spain. He was a strict disciplinarian, an accomplished seaman. A year before the attack on the *Mexican*, De Soto had saved seventy-two persons aboard the shipwrecked vessel *Minerva* at great risk to himself. This act of heroism was well-known in America.

The captain of the *Panda* was Don Pedro Gilbert, also a Spaniard. Gilbert was about thirty-five, a very handsome fellow, and able captain, with intimate knowledge of the slave trade.

The ship's carpenter was one Francisco Ruiz, stocky and muscular.

The *Panda* had not previously engaged in piracy. She began her fateful voyage at Havana, leaving port about the time the *Mexican* was departing from Salem. She was bound for the Gold Coast with a cargo of rum, arms, powder and cloth to be exchanged for slaves.

Bad man of the group was Ruiz, the carpenter. It was he who instigated the piracy. Always a ne'er-do-well, he had dreams of being a pirate king. He managed to persuade both Gilbert and De Soto to his way of thinking. It was decided to seize the first vessel that came to hand, which happened to be the *Mexican*. The *Mexican* was plundered, stripped, and left to burn with her crew trapped in the hold.

As a matter of fact, Ruiz had left orders that the *Mexican's* crew be murdered before she was abandoned, and the *Panda* had gone a day's sail before Ruiz learned that his grisly command had been disregarded. The *Panda* put about and returned to search for the *Mexican;* but the American vessel, blown by a favoring gale, was at the time well on her way toward Salem; and the Spaniards, concluding that the *Mexican* had sunk with all hands, continued toward their original destination, Africa.

On the Isle of Princes, division of treasure from the *Mexican* was made. Gilbert took five thousand dollars as captain; De Soto three thousand as owner; Ruiz had a thousand as his share, and the rest of the crew realized between three and five hundred dollars apiece.

When the British gunboat was sighted off the Isle of Princes, the pirates fled up the Nazareth River as previously described. Thirteen of them were captured. A good many of the crew had died of tropical fever; some were slain in the river battle; the fate of the rest is unknown.

All of the important pirates were captured: captain, owner, carpenter, cook and cabin boy. The prisoners were taken first to Fernando Po in Africa, and then to London. After extradition, they were sent to America in the gun-brig H.M.S. *Savage*.

ON August 26, 1834—two years almost to the day since the *Mexican's* original departure—the thirteen culprits were landed at Crowningshield's Wharf in Salem. They were taken in carriages through densely packed streets to the Salem town hall. A contemporary newspaper account described the prisoners as young, clean and wholesome in appearance. From Salem, they were taken to Boston for trial.

One of the crew managed to cut his throat with a concealed sliver of glass and died in jail before his trial.

On November 11, 1834, Gilbert the captain, De Soto the owner, Ruiz the carpenter, Ferrer the cook, Costa the cabin boy, and seven able seamen (by name: Boyga, Guzman, Portana, Castillo, Garcia, Velasquez, and Montenegro) were arraigned before the Circuit Court of the United States on the charge of piracy upon the high seas.

Numerous witnesses were called, including Captain Butman and most of his crew, who identified the prisoners beyond reasonable doubt.

Most damaging witnesses were three of the prisoners—Guzman, Portana, and Velasquez—who were allowed to turn state's evidence. The trial lasted two weeks. The jury retired overnight. The cabin boy, the cook, and the three who had given state's evidence were adjudged not guilty. A verdict of guilty was returned for the rest. A special recommendation for clemency on behalf of De Soto was rendered.

The usual delays occurred while appeals were being made. The execution date was finally set for June 11, 1835. Bernado de Soto was given a respite of sixty days so that an appeal for mercy might be brought to the attention of the President. Ruiz also received a respite; the swarthy carpenter had become apparently insane.

The rest joined in a suicide pact. Garcia attempted to slash open an arm vein with a concealed sliver of glass, but guards prevented him. Boyga was more successful. In full view of a policeman, he made a deep gash in the left side of the neck, from which blood gushed copiously. Medical attention was immediately obtained, and the laceration sutured, but Boyga was in deep shock from loss of blood and was unconscious. He was taken to the place of execution in a sedan chair nevertheless.

The trap was duly sprung; the ropes snapped taut; five bodies twitched briefly in the air and died.

These corpses were sought by a medical school for dissection. However, the Spanish consul protested. Only the bodies of murderers could so be disposed according to law, he maintained, and no murder had been committed. So the bodies were buried instead at Charlestown cemetery.

IN the meantime, news of the trials had reached La Coruña, Spain, where Bernado de Soto made his home. And De Soto's gorgeous young wife Donna sailed directly for New York, landing to discover that De Soto had already been tried and found guilty, that his companions had been hanged, and that he was due shortly to suffer the same fate himself. She rushed to Washington, obtained a personal interview with President Andrew Jackson and threw herself sobbing at his feet.

Whether Old Stonewall melted before the beauties of Donna de Soto, or whether he merely made allowance for her husband's previous heroism is not recorded. At any rate, he issued a proclamation of pardon for Bernado de Soto. The erstwhile owner of the *Panda* returned to Spain with his gorgeous wife and remained an honest man for the rest of his days.

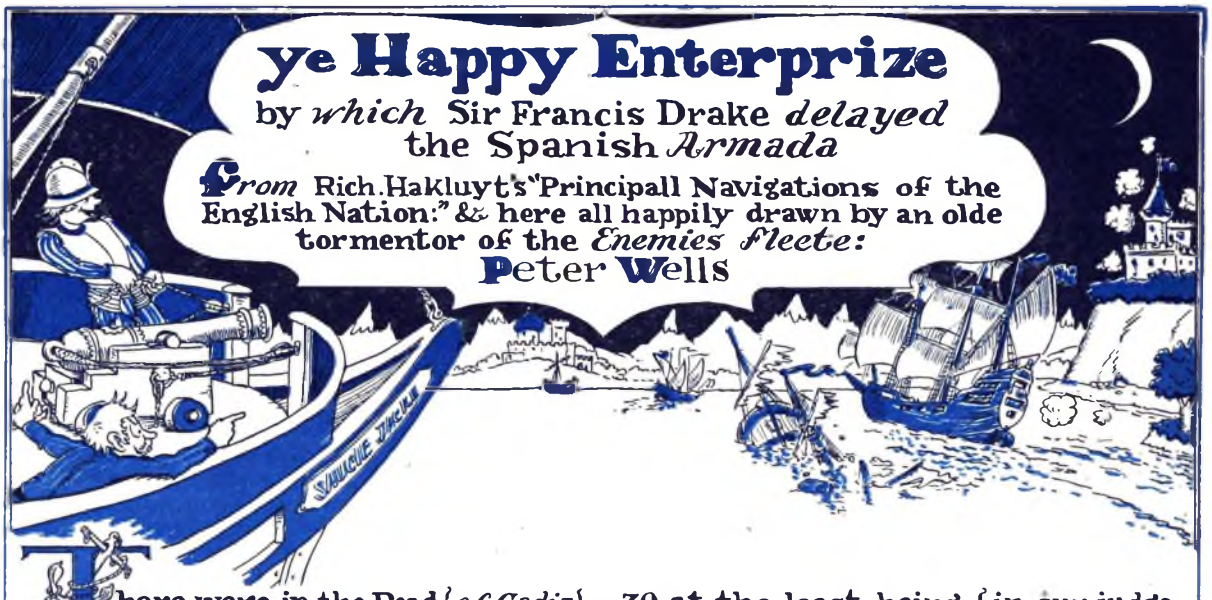
Francisco Ruiz, the violent carpenter who was the cause of the whole affair, remained undisposed of. Finally two Spanish-speaking Navy surgeons were assigned to live in the same cell with him. After considerable observation, they came to the conclusion that the insanity was feigned; and on November 11, 1835, Francisco Ruiz was hanged, the last pirate to be executed in the United States.

ye Happy Enterprize

by *which* Sir Francis Drake *delayed* the Spanish *Armada*

From Rich. Hakluyt's "Principall Navigations of the English Nation:" & here all happily drawn by an olde tormentor of the *Enemies Fleete:*

Peter Wells



There were in the Road {*of Cadiz*} 60. ships and divers other small vessels under the fortresse: there fled about 20. French ships to Port Real, and some small Spanish vessels that might passe the sholdes. At our first coming in we sunke with our shot a ship of Raguza of a 1000. tunnes, furnished with 40 pieces of brasse and very richly laden. There came two Gallies more from S. Mary port, and two from Porto Reale, which shot freely at us, but altogether in vaine: for they went away with the blowes well beaten for their paines...

Moreover we tooke 3. Flyboats of 300. tunnes a piece laden with biscuit, whereof one was halfe unladen by us in the Harborow, and there fired, and the other two wee tooke in our company to the Sea. Likewise there were fired by us ten other ships which were laden with wine, raisins, figs, oiles, wheat, & such like. To conclude, the whole number of ships and barkes {as we suppose} then burnt, suncke and brought away with us, amounted to 30. at the least, being {in our judgement} about 10000. tunnes of shipping.

There were in sight of us at Porto Real about 40. ships, besides those that fled from Cadiz.

We found little ease during our aboad there, by reason of their continuall shooting from the Gallies, the fortresses, and from the shoare, where continually at places convenient they planted new ordinance to offend us with: besides the inconvenience which wee suffered from their ships, which, when they could defend no longer, they set on fire to come among us... which... was a pleasant sight for us to beholde, because we were thereby eased of a great labour, which lay upon us day and night, in discharging the victuals, and other provisions of the enemie. Thus by the assistance of the Almightie, and the invincible courage and industrie of our Generall, this strange and happy enterprize was atchieved in one day and two nights, to the great astonishment of the King of Spaine...

1587 A.D.

Condors Don't Pay

As we go to press, we discover that two of the great national weeklies, the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Life*, have beat us to the punch the same week with articles about the California condor. However, we think you will find enough additional material in these pages to merit a reading. Incidentally, we note that our author agrees with the *Post* that the condor lays an egg once in two years, rather than with *Life's* opinion that this blessed event occurs only once in four years.

RECENTLY a man named Tom Lemmen was driving at night through a fog on a back country road near the mountainous Los Padres National Forest in California's Ventura County. Suddenly he got the eerie feeling that he wasn't alone, that something big and ominous was moving along with him above his car. At first he thought it was a small plane or glider, since it made only a hissing sound, faintly distinct over the noise of his motor. Then, as he slowed, beginning to perspire at the prospect of a sudden crash on top of him, a huge object sailed into view, settling lower over the road directly ahead of him. As his headlights etched it against the fog, Lemmen thought he was dreaming. It was a bird, the largest he had ever seen, something out of a prehistoric age, with a huge black body and a wing-span that went from one side of the road to the other. The bird glided for a moment a few yards ahead of Lemmen's car; then, as suddenly as it had appeared, rose and without a visible motion of its wings soared again into the fog whence it had come.

As Lemmen regained his wits, he realized he had caught his first sight of America's largest and mightiest bird, the fabled California condor, whose sole known nesting places were among the craggy and almost inaccessible peaks in the nearby National Forest. Although he had lived in the valley under the mountains as a rancher and orange-grower for over thirty years, it was no miracle that he had never seen a condor before. The most awesome American bird, it is also the rarest.

Today, the scarcity of the California condor (authorities estimate that there are only sixty in existence) has made it the object of a dramatic controversy between a peppery band of determined ornithologists, bent on saving the bird from going the way of the dodo and great auk, and an equally resolute group of hard-boiled California oil operators and speculators, battling furiously to save their investments on public land where the condors have their nesting grounds.

In Washington, two of the oil men desperately put their case to the Bureau of Land Management, the Government agency with jurisdiction over the land involved. "We've got hundreds of thousands of dollars tied up in leases, plans and geology," one of them stated to the officials. "Any day we can start subleasing this land to major oil companies, or start drilling ourselves. Now suddenly along comes a college boy who has to write a paper for graduation. He fastens on these big vultures, gets himself notoriety by proclaiming that they'll die off unless the oil people are kept out of this land, and one-two-three, everybody's listening to him, and we're being thrown into the cold."

WHAT had actually happened was far from a one-two-three decision by anyone. And though their frustration had caused the oil men to settle on a single scapegoat, they were not up against a college boy who needed a degree, but against all the prestige and influence of the country's outstanding ornithologists, marshaled by the doughty officials of the powerful National Audubon Society. Veteran of many hard-fought conservation battles in and out of the Government, the Society more than a dozen years ago had taken on the preservation of *Gymnogyps Californianus*, the California condor, as an important cause. As the Society had once saved the snowy egret from extinction by getting Congress to ban the sale of the bird's plumage for women's hats, it now went to work to protect the condors. The solution, arrived at more than a year ago, was to close the birds' nesting areas to the public.

Though it came suddenly, the decision to protect the condors in their natural homes stemmed from long planning and study by many ornithologists. When the Audubon Society initially took up the problem, there was much general information on the birds, but nothing authoritative on how to halt their march to extinction. Member of the vulture family, and cousin to the more aggressive Andean condor of South America, the California variety was once common over great areas of the State. Because of its large and hideous appearance, its naked reddish-orange head, its three-and-a-half foot height and ten-foot wingspread, as well as its great muscular power, it has always been the subject of fearsome stories. In the days when the Mexican Dons drove large cattle herds across the California plains, tales were told of condors swooping down and carrying off live calves to their mountain eyries. Sometimes these stories included first-person narratives of how men had been attacked.

Such a scare occurred as late as 1934, when an enthusiastic California newspaperman reported that a condor had been sighted flying with a struggling colt in its talons! The Santa Barbara Museum sent out an illustrated story to prove that the claws and beak of the condor will not permit it to grasp or carry live food, even so large as a rabbit. Moreover, as all ornithologists know, the bird subsists entirely on dead animals, though it may peck at the eyes of a wounded steer or lamb to hasten its death. Several years ago a story was told that four condors had been seen dragging a bear's body over two hundred yards, but even this was discounted.

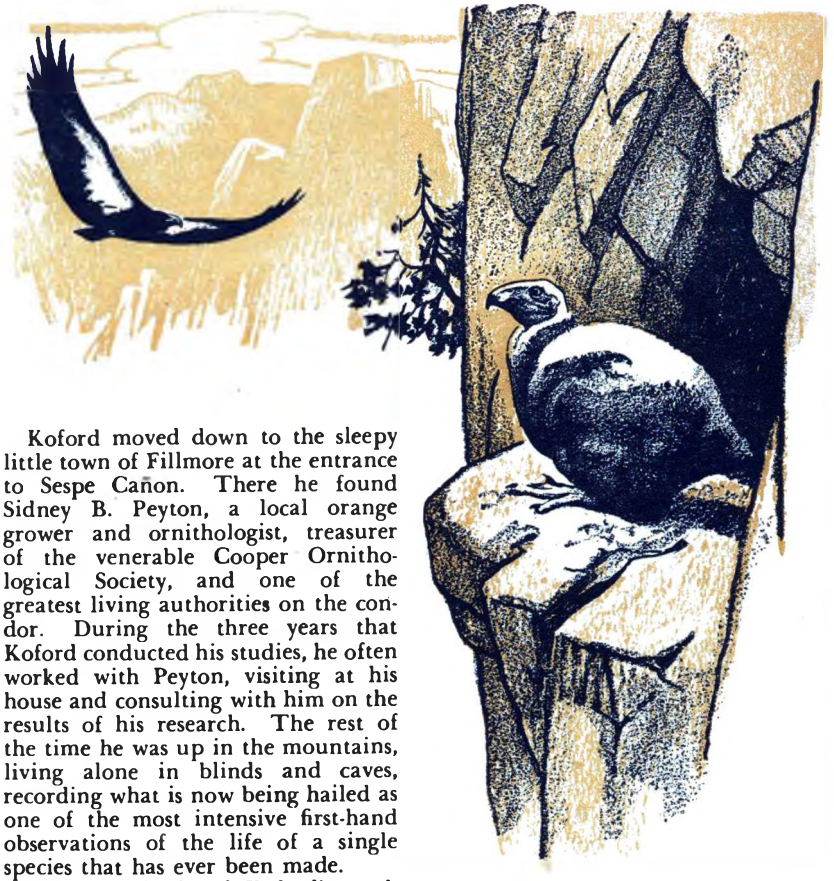
The sole known survivor of the Pleistocene age, the California condor is actually a relic of the days when wild life was plentiful and nature had to supply scavengers to clean up the remains of stupendous fights between saber-toothed tigers and mastodons. Skeletons of the condor, very much as it is today, have been found in the La Brea Tar Pits of Los Angeles, dating the bird back fifty thousand years.

The modern condor, only slightly smaller than his ancestor, had good living until civilization and modern veterinarians with vaccination serums interfered with his food supply. Once cattle stopped dropping on the open ranges from anthrax and black leg,

Taxes

by ALVIN M. JOSEPHY JR.

Illustrated by Carl Burger



trouble set in for the big bird. As starvation cut his numbers down, two other menaces appeared, the hunter and the egg-stealer. The great size of the setting condor makes it an easy target for a man with a gun. No one knows how many thousands of condors have been shot just because they afforded a good target to a passing hunter*. Similarly, because of the difficulty in getting up among high crags to the condor's nest, stealing eggs was quite a challenge. After a while, it was discovered that they fetched fancy prices from museums and collectors. Since a condor lays only one egg every two years, each egg stolen cut appreciably into the species' birth rate. Today hunting condors or their eggs is prohibited by law.

By the late 1930's the big bird was well on its way to extinction. Reports at the time placed its total population at anywhere from twenty-five to one hundred. Moreover, the surviving condors had now all become centered in the rugged and formidable Sespe Cañon region of the Los Padres Forest, tucked in the Pacific coast range about fifty miles northwest of Los Angeles. A forest fire, roaring across the cañons and dizzy slopes in the area, could easily wipe out most of the nests and bring final doom to the breed.

IT was at this point that the Audubon Society determined to meet the problem head-on. First, an exhaustive study had to be made of the bird's breeding habits and the way it lived, so that every possible measure could be taken to halt its decline. In association with the University of California, the Society established a fellowship, enabling Carl B. Koford, a graduate student in zoölogy at Berkeley, to undertake the study.

Koford moved down to the sleepy little town of Fillmore at the entrance to Sespe Cañon. There he found Sidney B. Peyton, a local orange grower and ornithologist, treasurer of the venerable Cooper Ornithological Society, and one of the greatest living authorities on the condor. During the three years that Koford conducted his studies, he often worked with Peyton, visiting at his house and consulting with him on the results of his research. The rest of the time he was up in the mountains, living alone in blinds and caves, recording what is now being hailed as one of the most intensive first-hand observations of the life of a single species that has ever been made.

The magnitude of Koford's work gains stature when it is realized what kind of country he had to traverse and exist in to carry on his studies. For about ten miles a passable mountain road, clinging to the sides of precipices that fell away thousands of feet below, made its way into what seemed like a lost world. At its end, the road simply vanished in a prehistoric setting of towering white cliffs, weird amphitheaters and jagged rock peaks, deep, narrow gorges and waterfalls. In the cliffsides were gigantic caves with ceilings two hundred feet high, and broad ledges that looked out over some of the wildest country in the United States. In some places there was impenetrable brush, barring passageway among crags and boulders. It was a land of mountain lions and bears, golden eagles, deer and wildcats.

Through much of the country passage was impossible, even on foot. Yet, moving from cave to cave among the mountain tops, Koford was able for months at a time to study at close range twelve different condor families. The nests were difficult to find, the four-inch long creamy-white eggs with tiny raised dots usually being hidden in crevices in the rocks. Koford corroborated much that was already known, how it takes two months to hatch a condor egg, how the new bird must then be fed by its parents for six months in the nest, how many more months must pass before it can join the ranks of mature birds, able to fly with confidence and hunts its own food.

On level ground, the condor has an awkward time getting into the air, especially after finishing a meal. Like an airplane, it must run along the earth, twisting its neck and flapping its wings, until after a hundred feet or so it gets up enough speed to take off and propel the heavy mass of its body into the air. But on the high ledges outside their caves, Koford saw the birds in their proper element, waiting on the rocky shelves, testing the air currents with their wings, then plummeting off into space until they caught a current and soared away. Spreading their wings, broad, black, with white undermarkings, they rose majestically past him, up out of the gorges and over the mountaintops, circling sometimes far above him for as long as thirty minutes without a wingflap.

When Koford finally wound up his observations, he also had much new information. Although his report, submitted as a thesis for his Ph. D. in zoölogy, is still being tabulated and has not yet been published, some of its more salient points have been re-

* William Byron Mowery, an able naturalist and frequent contributor to BLUE BOOK, comments that many condors were shot by farmers and ranchmen, not wantonly but in the belief that this scavenger bird spread the infection of hog cholera and other animal diseases.

vealed. Among them is the conclusion that the increase in the condor population through reproduction is now being balanced by mortality among the older birds. Since there are no more than twenty mating pairs left, and since each female brings forth only one egg in two years, the future of the species literally depends on the successful hatching of each egg. Koford also found that the presence of a human being within five hundred yards of a nest can agitate the female so that she may either break the egg or leave it and never return to it. The close margin between preservation and extinction could thus be influenced beyond all repair by one careless person.

EVEN before all these facts had been assembled, the Audubon Society and the Chief of the Wildlife Division of the U. S. Forestry Service in Washington decided in 1947 to take steps to try to protect the birds from further decline. In Santa Barbara, California, the regional office of the Forestry Service was asked to recommend an area within the Los Padres Forest to be set aside as a bird sanctuary, the area to include all the known nesting places of the condor. As soon as the recommendation was made, it was to be submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for approval under Regulation T-9 of the Secretary, which prohibits "the unauthorized going on or being upon any area of U. S. land which has been closed by the Chief of the Forestry Service for the perpetuation and protection of rare or vanishing species of plants or animals." In other words, as soon as the Secretary affixed his signature, it would be illegal for most people to get within the five-hundred-yard agitating distance of a condor's nest.

There was a loophole, however, in T-9. Specifically excluded from the prohibitions of the regulation were persons seeking mineral leases, such leases on public lands coming under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management of the Interior Department. For many years there had been some half-hearted oil drilling in the area. Unspectacular in its results, it had all but been abandoned. A few leaseholders, discouraged by the experience of others, hadn't even bothered to drill. The ruggedness of the country added to the general lack of interest. Geologists had only made surface explorations in a few places, and most of the territory was still unleased—quiet, primitive mountain country, for rent by Uncle Sam at twenty-five cents an acre per year. In 1947 that loophole in T-9 didn't seem particularly important.

The next year, however, occurred an event to confound the plans of the Audubon Society. A great oil boom struck the nearby Cuyama Valley, and a mad scramble started for oil leases all through the Los Padres Forest. In a matter of weeks, leases had been applied for to almost all the land in the proposed condor refuge, including every inaccessible peak and cave. Geologists and engineers, speculators and operators came in by packhorse and helicopter. In the Cuyama, the oil was coming from strata deeper than the ones geologists had previously surveyed in the Forest. Operators could now see a rich new field opening up, with great profits coming from rentals to major oil companies.

In the face of the Forestry Service's helplessness, the bird-lovers who had been hopefully following the plans of the Audubon Society closed their eyes and said a prayer for the condors. They could see bustling trucks, roads, oil camps, and iron rigs shoving through the area, dooming the condor to a hasty end. The Audubon Society and its forceful President, John Baker, saw differently. Oil strike or no oil strike, the area had to be closed to all human beings if the condors were to survive.

WITH the cooperation of the conservation-minded Forestry Service, a recommendation was forwarded to Secretary Krug of the Interior Department, urging that some forty thousand acres, enclosing all the known condor nests, be withdrawn as quickly as possible from public entry. In order to stop the lease applications until a thorough study could be made of the situation, the Interior Department on December 28, 1949, temporarily withdrew the forty thousand acres, closing them to public entry of any kind.

This action took the oil prospectors by complete surprise.

Confused, and not sure what was going on, some forty of the oil men sent two of their number to Washington with a personal plea to the Bureau of Land Management.

In Washington, the two men made a business-like appeal, presented case after case of money invested in the land, deals already made and new ones about to be consummated. One operator stood to lose fifteen thousand dollars already paid for applications, geology and plans. Another had been offered $110,000 by a major oil company for a sublease to the land for which he had applied. A third had sunk twelve thousand dollars in expenses, was holding off fat offers from several companies. So it went.

The Bureau of Land Management, caught in the middle, could only promise a thorough study of the situation by two other Divisions of the Department of Interior, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Geological Survey. If, on the basis of the study, the Secretary of Interior could decide whether to set aside the temporary withdrawal order, or make it permanent, he would. Otherwise, an open hearing would be held before both parties to the controversy in Ventura County. Meanwhile, pending the decision, old leaseholders could continue working their land until the next renewal time came around, but no renewals or new applications would be accepted.

The unsuccessful appeal of the two-man delegation filled the oil men with consternation. A little preliminary sleuthing revealed some horrible facts: the Forestry Service had been greatly impressed by Koford's conclusions; the Fish and Wildlife Service would probably be just as impressed; and the Audubon Society was somehow lurking in the background, giving authority and weight to what Koford had written.

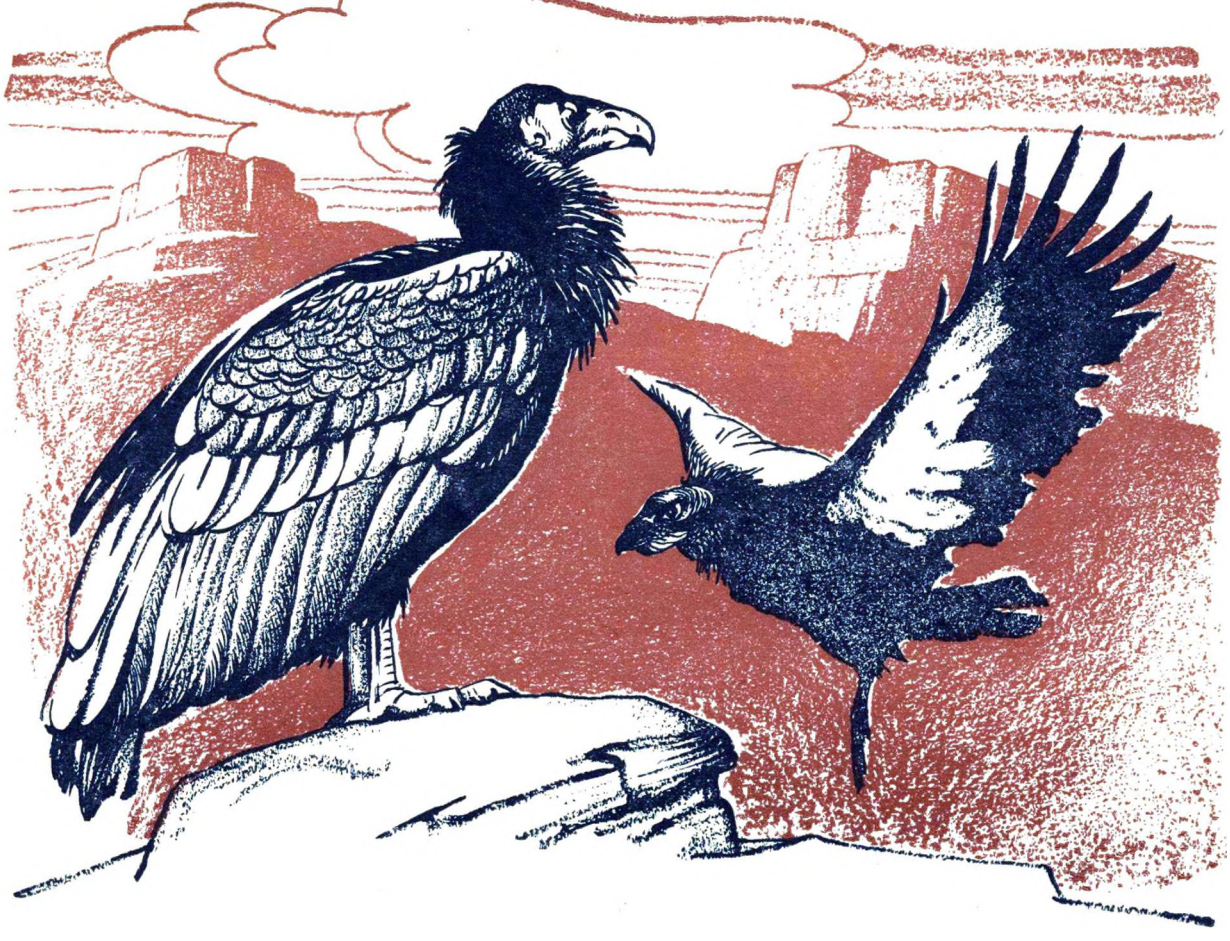
The oil men were incredulous that a mere college boy was responsible for their troubles. The very idea galled them, yet as they realized that it was going to be the birds or themselves, they hastened to the conclusion that Koford had to be contended with as a major enemy.

No one knew exactly what he had written. Some unsuccessful attempts were made to get a copy of his report. Then it was decided to out-research him, learn more about the condor than he knew, and discredit him. In a rush, oil men scrambled to public libraries, pulled out bibliographies on vultures and buzzards, copied reams of notes. Lengthy reports, designed for Government bodies, newspapers, and the general public, were prepared, some in objective scientific terms, others more passionately partisan.

"According to authoritative encyclopedias, dictionaries and texts," one report announced, "the California condor is a very large bird of *prey*. There are many people who mistakenly refer to it as just a 'big buzzard.' Of the family Cathartidae. . . . Condors kept in captivity have proven to be friendly and easily fed."

ANOTHER scholarly report deviated from pure science long enough to note that, "it seems that all the writers about this bird have been carried away by sentiment. If the condor is not portrayed as a ghoul or ghost of the nether world, it is painted in the other extreme as an angelic bird with supernatural intelligence."

A more aggressive oil man carried his research a step nearer the field, determined to pin Koford to the mat with investigation among eyewitnesses. Culling his memory for likely authorities whom he had met during



past years as a mine and oil operator in Mexico and the West, he dispatched letters to aging trappers, mountain men, and engineers, hopefully suggesting that they could tell him something about the condor.

The first reply came snapping back from a Ventura deputy county game warden, but it was not very helpful, being more concerned with the angry fact that he had left his mountain lion traps in the condor refuge, and now couldn't get a Forestry permit to go in and get them out.

Another letter from an old mountain man with a shaky hand said: "Seems about everyone who has lived in the mts. any length of time has seen the condor, yet know very little about the bird."

At the same time, another of the oil men managed with a fervent appeal to win the Ventura Board of Supervisors to his side. "Gentlemen," he exclaimed at a public hearing called by the Board to investigate the controversy going on in its county, "condors pay no taxes!"

And now the oil men changed their tactics. Suddenly they became the best friends the condors ever had. The reason for the birds' disappearance, they abruptly revealed, was because they were starving to death. Civilization had driven them into an area in which no food existed for them. They had to fly hundreds of miles to the flat grazing land around Bakersfield to find carrion; and there, after a good meal, they were fair game for coyotes, because they couldn't get off the ground.

A long brief presented to the Interior Department, asserted that it could be shown that most of the condors' nests exist in one very small, highly compact corner of the forty thousand acres. Why not, it suggested, withdraw just that one corner and then have an appropriate agency of the Federal Government bestow upon the birds the attention they deserved, feeding them systematically so that they would not continue to starve?

"A refuge containing a few square miles and rigidly protected from encroachment by everyone is all that is necessary," it stated. "In addition, a small sum of money must be annually expended to provide food in the form of tough old sheep, goats, horses, and cattle, to be slaughtered at a suitable site—to guarantee the birds ample food. Without providing food, no refuge of any size will help save the condor. His chief food supplier, the mountain lion, has already been almost exterminated in the area, and the modern range stock seldom die from disease. Man must take the place of the lion and disease to provide the food."

Meanwhile at Lake Success, a resolution, passed by the International Technical Conference on the Protection of Nature of the United Nations, may have had some influence in tipping the scales in favor of the ornithologists. Recommending that the various governments "take immediate and vigorous action to preserve threatened and vanishing species of fauna and flora," the resolution adds that the survival of certain species is "a matter of international concern." Among them, specifically mentioned, is the California condor.

The final decision, of course, was in the nature of a compromise: In January of this year ten thousand acres was set aside as a complete and inviolate sanctuary for the condors; an additional twenty-five thousand acres was opened to the oil prospectors with the proviso that no drilling should be attempted within one-half-mile of any condor nest. . . . At any rate, the condor will be given an opportunity to win its fight against extinction. If it succeeds, there may come a day when Forestry officials will find a way to let the general public view its mightiest bird. Until then, only an occasional Tom Lemmen can expect to meet up with one.

Battlefield Rescue

THE MARINE CORPS HELICOPTER PILOTS HAVE A HAZARDOUS AND IMPORTANT JOB IN KOREA.

by CAPTAIN HUBARD KUOKKA, U.S.M.C.

Illustrated by BRENDAN LYNCH

IT looked to Marine Major Ken Reusser as if he had had it for sure. In his screaming rocket run on the North Korean tank, he had picked up a Communist rifle bullet in his oil system.

"Damn!" He looked at his gauges again. Sure enough he was losing oil pressure, and his oil temperature was going up. Already his cockpit was getting hot. He wondered if his blue Corsair, with the word MARINES on the side and twenty bombs painted on its nose, would go up in another one of those mysterious explosions.

Needless to say he had turned back from enemy territory and was using the momentum of his three-hundred-knot dive to pick up all the altitude he could. If he could get over those hills and land in the bay beyond—

Reusser got on the mike and told the rest of his division that he might have to jump. He managed to get four thousand feet, but was still over enemy lines. The mountains were 3,500 feet high. His oil pressure read zero; the temperature hit the red line: and he smelled smoke. Then his fighting Corsair died with a frozen engine and limply dropped its nose toward the mountain wall. He had to get out—quick. Twice before he had been shot down, but then had made crash landings in the water—once at Guadalcanal and once off Okinawa. This was the first time Reusser had had to hit the silk. His heart was in his mouth, but the white 'chute billowed out into beautiful full bloom.

Meanwhile his buddy, First Lieutenant Bob Minick of Baltimore, Maryland, the leader of the section of Ken Reusser's division, circled the three remaining Corsairs around the white 'chute, assuring the dangling pilot the support and protection of their twelve twenty-millimeter cannon.

Reusser was not happy. *Swish!* A huge missile of some sort whistled

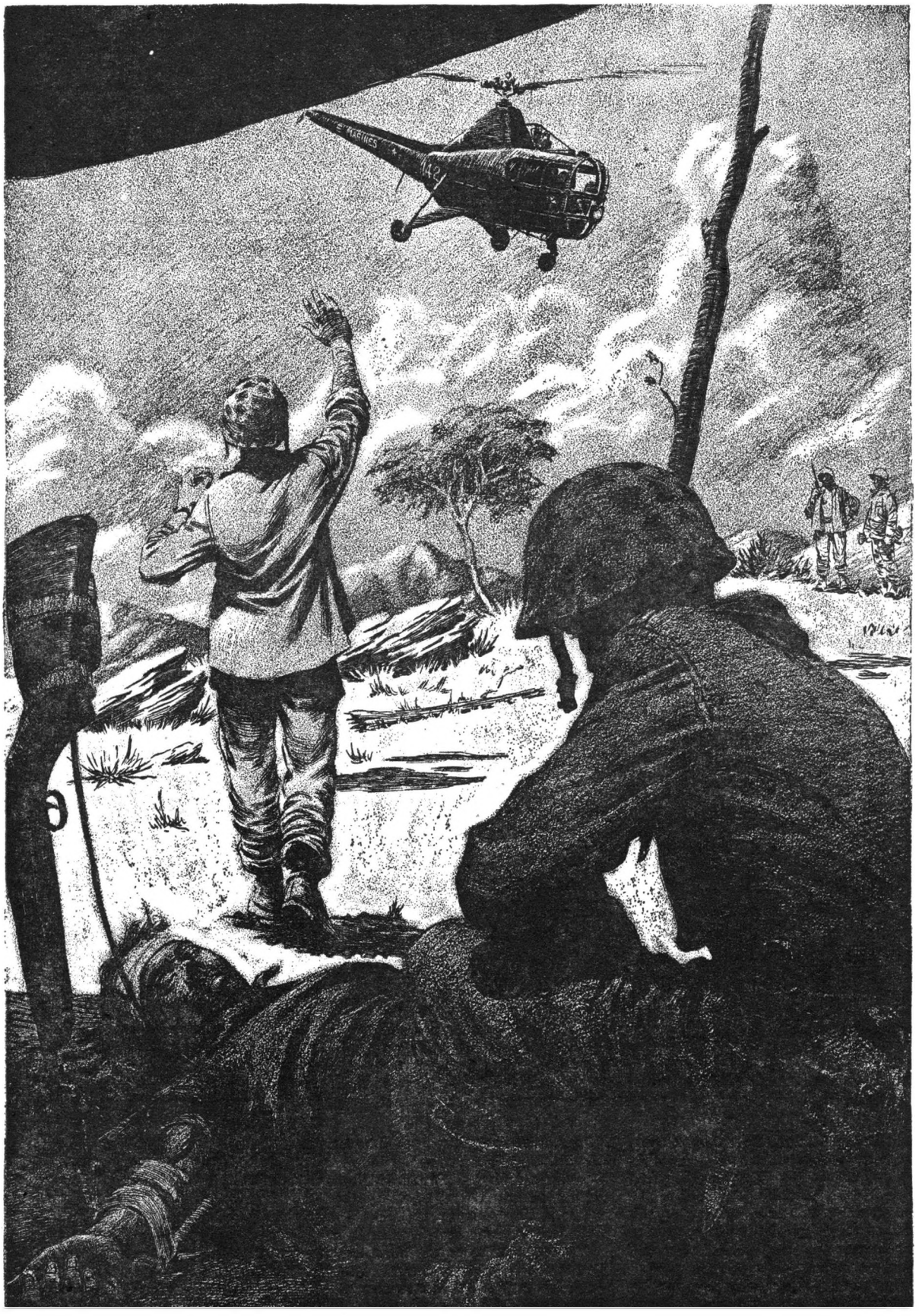
This was the first time Reusser had had to hit the silk. His heart was in his mouth.

past him. It sounded dangerously like heavy ack-ack. *Swish!* Another one. The three Corsairs pounced down upon the puffs of flame on the ground and clobbered up the enemy position with deadly high explosive and armor-piercing steel. Reusser heard no more shells whistle past.

The wind was drifting him out of enemy lines into no-man's land. Then a Marine OY Grasshopper observation plane from VMO-6 appeared and circled around Reusser as he hit the ground. The OY pilot was a friend of Reusser's, named Captain Bill Parker, from Providence, R. I.

Parker was marking Reusser's position for a rescue plane. Also he kept his eyes open for enemy troops threatening the downed pilot. If he saw any, he would radio to the fighters above, for Parker's plane was unarmed.

Captain Parker, leaning his head over the side to look, was startled by a crash in his own plane. He looked up to see a bullet hole in his windshield. If he had been sitting up straight, he would have got it between the eyes. . . .


MARINES
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On the ground Reusser heard a peculiar heating of wings and the sound of a 450-horsepower engine. Down the mountainside flapped a HO3S helicopter from VMO-6. Its pilot, Captain George Farish of Hollis, N. Y., had been en route to one of his routine missions to pick up badly wounded Marines from the front lines when he heard over his radio of Reusser's emergency. Farish hovered over the pilot and decided that the ground was too soft to land. Farish's crewman, Corporal Edwin Lester of Washington, D. C., lowered a line. Reusser was pulled up and taken aboard the helicopter.

Reports say that the VMO-6 helicopter pilot had made the rescue five minutes after Reusser had landed by parachute. After delivering Reusser to safety, Farish again took off on his original mission to pick up a badly wounded Marine from a first-aid station and deliver him to the rear.

He circled a small hilltop which a Marine platoon had taken, and saw a Navy hospital corpsman rise from an olive-green-clad form on the ground and wave to him.

Farish pulled up on the pitch stick with his left hand and eased the cyclic stick back a bit with his right hand, and hovered fifty feet over the men below. It would be difficult to carry a badly wounded man down to where an ambulance could jolt its way back to a field hospital.

Farish landed in a swirling cloud of reddish dust. Cpl. Lester jumped out, unfolded a collapsible litter and lined it with soft blankets. The badly wounded Marine was eased into the bed, hoisted aboard the Sikorsky helicopter. Lester tied him down and jumped aboard himself.

The huge rotor whirled faster and faster in a shattering crescendo of noise and dust, and the little craft jumped up and away. Farish eased forward on the cyclic stick, and the helicopter leaned forward, nose down and headed for the hospital. In the fields below, Korean farmers gawked with open-mouthed upturned faces.

The wounded man's litter was too long to fit completely into the tiny cabin. The eddies of air and the vibration aroused him from his coma. When he finally realized that he was hanging halfway out of a helicopter a couple of hundred feet above the ground, he was startled and began to fight. The wisely placed tie-down straps restrained him.

After delivering the man to the field hospital, Farish headed for the VMO-6 squadron area and the best chow in Korea, prepared by Technical Sergeant Charles P. Witt of Luzerne, Pa.

He saw a corpsman rise from a form on the ground and wave.

Captain Vic Armstrong of Portland, Oregon, who was the Executive Officer of VMO-6 at that time, had already heard of the Reusser rescue from Captain Parker.

"What are you doing, man?" he asked Farish in his pokerfaced way. "Trying to clobber up our Gooney Birds? There must have been several thousands Reds in the area where you picked Ken up."

Farish raised his eyebrows. "Ha, so? Haven't you heard? If we can't scare 'em with our ugly looks, we beat them to death with our rotors."

Armstrong snickered. "Sure, sure. I guess you heard that Minick got a slug in his fuel system while he was covering Reusser's bail-out."

"No. Is he O.K.?"

"Yeah. He was able to land and fix it up before flying back to the carrier. Funny thing! Everyone seems to have been hit but you. And you were the sitting duck. How did you do it?"

"I tell you, I beat them down with my rotor blades."

Most Marine pilots know one another in their relatively small organization, and because of their close teamwork with the ground Marines, they are able to call many of their infantry and artillery brothers by their first names.

VMO-6 (Marine Observation Squadron Six) is symbolic of the versatility of Marine aviation and its close coördination with the Marine ground forces. This is based on the assumption that every Marine flying man should know how to lead an infantry platoon or company in combat as well as fly. To attain this close coördination, both air and ground officers are expected to attend the Amphibious Warfare School at Quantico early in their careers.

VMO-6 is equipped with both OY Grasshopper planes and Sikorsky HO3S helicopters, plus the recent addition of Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers and North American SNJ Texans for observation and utility work.

The squadron is commanded by Major Vincent J. Gottschalk of Pontiac, Michigan. It is now under the control of the First Marine Air Wing administratively, and the First Marine Division operationally. It has moved up through Korea with the front-line troops. All its pilots are qualified fighter pilots, and many have flown at one time or another with fighter squadrons such as Reusser's, the Black Sheep squadron. In fact, one of the Marines' first helicopter pilots, Captain Charles Garber of Washington, D. C., is now serving a tour of duty with a Marine fighter squadron on board an aircraft carrier in Korean waters. Garber taught many of the present VMO-6 pilots how to fly helicopters at Quantico, Va.

When the First Marine Brigade under Brigadier General Edward A. Craig went into Korea late in July, it became the first military organization to employ and test helicopters in ground warfare.

Their employment first was in an administrative way. General Craig and his staff used the Sikorsky HO3S's as flying jeeps to inspect sub-commands, to select command posts to observe their units' operations, and to fly from shore to ships afloat.

Shortly after the Marines had landed at Pusan, a North Korean radio station was reported on a mountain top behind the Marine lines. A ground patrol set out to get it. It was accompanied by a helicopter flown by First Lieutenant Robert Longstaff of Jersey City, N. J., who reconnoitered the roads and areas ahead and on the flanks. During this mission, one of the helicopter's greatest capabilities was discovered. It was in removing Marine casualties to safety from the precipitous slopes of the mountain-side.

By the end of November more than four hundred serious casualties had been evacuated from inaccessible front-line positions by the eight Sikorsky HO3S's of the squadron. One day one particular helicopter flown in shifts by the VMO-6 pilots evacuated twenty-four wounded Marines, soldiers and ROK troops. At the end of November when elements of the First Marine Division had to fight their way out of encirclements by Chinese Communists on the icy shores of Chosen reservoir, the helicopters evacuated 137 wounded in three days.

During the Inchon operation the rotary winged aircraft operated from LST landing ships on artillery spotting and observation missions. They also laid telephone wire for ground communications. Captain Vic Armstrong flew Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, overall commander of the Marine Forces in the Pacific, to Kimpo airfield near Seoul by 'copter while fighting was still in progress on the airfield perimeter. Theirs was the first aircraft to land on the newly won strip.

Once First Lieutenant Gus Lueddeke of Maplewood, N. J., fished a Marine fighter pilot out of the ocean while on an administrative flight to an aircraft carrier in the area. The fighter pilot, Captain J. K. Johnson, of a Marine fighter squadron operating off the carrier, made a crash landing into the sea as Lueddeke was about to land on the ship. Lueddeke flew over to Johnson, lowered his

One helicopter chased a motorcyclist down a road until he took refuge in a shed.

hoist-line, picked up the pilot by his Mae West hoist straps, and dropped him dripping onto the flight deck of the carrier.

This was one of the first of numerous spectacular rescues which made VMO-6 the toast of every Marine and Navy fighter pilot in Korea. Some fighter squadrons even bought beer and candy to send to the squadron with their compliments.

By the end of November, Lueddeke had rescued more than five downed pilots while on his other routine missions. Three of the rescues were out of the water, and the rest were made deep in North Korean enemy territory. By this time the squadron as a whole had returned more than thirty downed Air Force, Navy and Marine and British flyers to safety.

Seven of the VMO-6 helicopters have received Silver Stars for daring rescues under enemy fire.

In September, Lieutenant A. R. Bancroft was decorated for picking up a Navy fighter pilot who had been shot down near the 38th parallel during the Seoul campaign, this under heavy fire. On the following day he himself was picked up by Lieutenant Robert Longstaff of Jersey City, N. J., after his helicopter crashed in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue an Air Force pilot north of Seoul. Longstaff got the Silver Star for rescuing successfully both Bancroft and his crewmen, Corporal John A. Kaczmarek of Oak Lawn, Ill., as well as the pilot that Bancroft was after. A few days later Bancroft was shot down by antiaircraft fire and crashed to his death. Captain Eugene Pope of Marinette, Wis., received the Silver Star for picking up his body.

In the first week of December, Lieutenant Longstaff was killed assisting First Marine Division Leathernecks in their fight out of Hagaru-ri.

Soon the Communists expected helicopter rescues of downed pilots, and frequently hurried to the scene of crashes or parachute bail-outs to lie in wait to shoot down the rotary winged aircraft.

In one instance a Navy helicopter pilot, Lieutenant (jg) Jones from a Navy cruiser, attempted to rescue a Navy fighter pilot in a foxhole on a hilltop north of Seoul. The fighter pilot's squadron mates had made several passes at the surrounding area but could observe no enemy. As Jones approached, the pilot in the foxhole motioned him away violently and shot into the nearby brush with his .38-caliber revolver. Jones lowered his hook but the pilot wouldn't take it, still motioning for Jones to get away.

Suddenly, out of the surrounding brush a volley of rifle fire peppered the helicopter, and Jones' gas-tank became a sieve. He himself was fully exposed in the plexiglas nose of the 'copter and could plainly see the Reds shooting at him excitedly. He applied full throttle, pulled up on the pitch stick, and back on the cyclic stick, and literally jumped back like a cat that sniffed at a firecracker at the wrong time. Jones' gas poured out, and he crashed into the Han River. Fortunately he was not hurt seriously.

Although rescue of the Navy fighter pilot was ruled out by the VMO-6 officers because of the approaching dusk, there was still a chance to save Jones. The problem was how to find him at night.

Captain Armstrong cranked up his Sikorsky and made a night takeoff. Helicopters don't have gyro instruments for night or instrument flying, so he had to feel his way to the Han River, relying on the star-dim horizon for his bearings.

Armstrong made his way cautiously through the night, guided by the silvery ribbon which was the river, speckled with dark sandbars, but was unable to see much of anything. He turned back upstream and flew lower. A sudden light dimly flashed from a sandbar.

Armstrong circled cautiously, fearing a trap. He made out the shape of the helicopter, in an awkward disabled position. He felt his way to a flat dry place on the sandbar, and Jones came running up out of the dark and climbed aboard.

At another time Armstrong made one of the squadron's most spectacular rescues when a Navy Lieutenant Commander Chick from a carrier went down near Pyongyang about ninety miles north of Kimpo airfield, where VMO-6 was based at the time. Navigating along roads and railroads at three thousand feet, Armstrong flew up to the hilltop where the Commander had taken refuge. While other fighters from the Commander's carrier kept the eager Communists away, Armstrong picked up the pilot and brought him back to Kimpo to set him down in front of a can of beer and good VMO-6 chow. Later, Commander Chick retaliated by sending the squadron a huge cake fancied up to perfection by the bakers on the carrier.

Besides Longstaff, Bancroft, Armstrong and Pope, the following VMO-6 helicopter pilots were recommended for Silver Stars: Captain Farish for evacuating two wounded Marines out of an ambush near Kojo; First Lieutenant Lloyd Englehardt of New Orleans for making three long rescue flights in two days over enemy territory; and Captain Wallace Blatt of Wormleysburg, Pa., for flying 110 miles into the enemy-held mountains to rescue a Marine fighter pilot who had bailed out.

By this time it was obvious that helicopters weren't built for fighting. The pilots had to be extremely cautious in enemy territory. Even if they had weapons, they couldn't have used them, because it takes both hands and feet to fly a 'copter. Consequently the squadron has been requesting modifications on the replacement helicopters, such as armor-plating, self-sealing gas-tanks, protection for the oil system, and special evacuation litters attachable to each side of the aircraft such as the comfortable closed-in beds built into each side of the Air Force's Air Sea Rescue helicopters.

The Gooney Birds did not do all the work in VMO-6. The OY's flew artillery spotting missions, and directed fighters to targets on the ground. Their work was extremely dangerous. The squadron lost four pilots or observers on their OY missions. The planes were unarmed, but often the airmen "bombed" the Reds with hand grenades.

Once Captain Alfred McCaleb of New Orleans, La., chased a motorcycle down a road while his observer Lieutenant Tom R. Braun of Washington, D. C., shot at the cyclist with a .45-caliber pistol. The man on the motorcycle fired back, but finally jumped off his cycle and took refuge in a shed.

Major Gottschalk and Captain Richard Dyer lost the engine on their OY on one flight and had to crash-land on a sandbar of the Han River. It was dusk, and they thought they were in enemy territory. An amphibious vehicle came up the river bed and Gottschalk and Dyer began to run for cover over the soft sand. The monster gained on them at every step they took. They were about to collapse.

"I swore I'd never get out of shape again," Gottschalk related.

Finally the pair dropped from exhaustion. The vehicle came to within a hundred feet of them and turned away. It was an American weasel.

"He chased us for a mile and wouldn't give us a ride back," Major Gottschalk declared.

The pair was picked up by Captain Farish and Lieutenant Lueddeke. The next day a mechanic was flown in to repair the OY, and Major Gottschalk flew it back to Kimpo.

Although many a "hot" fighter pilot laughed when the Marine Corps started experimenting with helicopters, they now concede that the Gooney Birds are here to stay. They've saved many a life and show many possibilities for the future.

Fighter Pilot Ken Reusser, who has flown more than sixty-five Korean missions off both carriers and land bases, said: "Those helicopter and OY boys of VMO-6 have done one of the biggest jobs in the Korean War."

Talk to any wounded Marine who was snatched by 'copter from a possible frozen death in the snowy Communist-encircled hills around Hagaruri at the Chosen Reservoir. He will agree.

Wacky Warfare

At least once in history, an army has been led to victory by a dead man.

The Cid, famous Spanish warrior of the Eleventh Century, felt death approaching during one of his campaigns. He accordingly drew up a set of instructions which were to be followed in the event his premonition proved well founded.

As he had feared, he died within a few days. His men had him embalmed and, as he had directed, the body was tied in the saddle. At the head of the Spanish troops, the corpse led the army against a vastly superior force of Moors, who were overwhelmingly defeated.

• • •

General Jan Ziska, Fifteenth Century Czech patriot, hated the Germans with a cold and relentless passion. Falling ill and learning that he could not recover, he ordered that after death his men make a military drum and cover it with his skin, in order that he might still lead them against the enemy. They reluctantly obeyed. But within a few months the Germans captured the drum—and used it to direct their soldiers against Ziska's own troops.

Animals played an involuntary, but decisive, rôle in an ancient battle.

Attacking the Egyptian city of Memphis about 550 B.C., King Cambyses of Persia found it strongly fortified. Great stones hurled by his engines of war failed to make a dent in the city wall.

The wily Persian, remembering that his foes worshiped the cat as a deity, rounded up several hundred toms and tabbies, used them as projectiles. The Egyptians were horrified at such treatment of their sacred animal, and surrendered at once.

• • •

The greatest act of courtesy in history took place at the Battle of Fontenoy, in 1745. As the opposing armies approached one another, Lord Hay rode out from the English lines and formally invited the French to fire first.

Comte d'Auteroches saluted his foe and replied: "Sir, we never fire first; please to fire yourselves."

Taking him at his word, the English opened fire—and with the first volley killed 49 officers, and about 760 enlisted men.

***—by* Webb Garrison**

How's the Weather, Mr. Jay?

Illustrated by CARL BURGER

THE AUTHOR OF TALES OF WHIPPOORWILL VALLEY TELLS ABOUT THE WEATHER LORE OF THE WILD FOLK.

by EWART A. AUTRY

ONE afternoon in mid-winter Jim Bailey, Dal Cooper and I pitched camp at the forks of Tippah and Tallahatchie rivers. Our object was a couple of nights of coon-hunting. Our tent was barely up when it started raining. It wasn't a hard rain—just slow and steady, as if it never aimed to quit.

There was no use trying to hunt coons in a rain like that. The dogs couldn't trail one as big as a cow. The rain didn't stop. For a while it came straight down through the treetops and pattered on our tent. Then the wind swung down from the North and slapped it sideways until it slanted like snow.

All night it rained and the wind blew. The next morning the wind had died but the rain was still falling and it seemed as cold as sleet. Dal and I were in a camp-breaking mood, but Jim suggested that we wait until noon and see what the weather was like. After breakfast, he picked up his gun and wandered off into the rain. In an hour he was back in a jubilant mood.

"It's gonna quit raining and the sun's coming out," he said.

"Weather prophet," snorted Dal as he watched the steady fall of rain outside.

"How did you get the news?" I asked.

"From a rabbit," he replied. "I went out to the edge of the hills and found one sitting in thin grass on a south hillside."

"Waiting for the sun, I suppose," said Dal.

"Exactly," replied Jim. "Before daylight a rabbit picks the place where he will spend the day. If the day is going to be cold and rainy, he will seek the deep grass or a brush-pile or sink-hole. If the sun is to come out, he will seek thin grass with a southern exposure where the sun can swing around and hit him."

"You mean a rabbit knows before daylight what the weather will be like that day?" I asked rather dubiously.

"He sure does," he replied, and began humming a tune.

We laughed at him, but in two hours the sun was out and the wind was blowing softly from the south. Since that day I have paid special attention to rabbit forecasts, and have found that Jim was right. One can forecast the weather for the day with a great degree of accuracy by taking note of the locations of rabbit beds early in the morning.

One mild morning last winter several of us were hunting rabbits. Of the ten we killed, nine were jumped from brush-piles. "That's a sign of cold weather," observed an experienced hunter as we headed for home a little before noon. By two o'clock the sky was overcast and the wind blowing a blizzard.

I don't know how a rabbit gets advance notices of the weather, but he seems to have a nearly perfect hook-up with weather headquarters. He doesn't peddle his information to the public, but certainly uses it for his own benefit.

Many creatures of the woods seem to be better weather forecasters than the average human being. Hunters and fishermen can sometimes save themselves a lot of trouble by paying attention to those woodland forecasters. A friend and I went crappie fishing down on Sardis Lake one day. In order to keep the car in the shade we drove down a steep hill and parked at the water's edge. We talked of how difficult it would be to get the car out if it rained.

We piled into our boat and paddled

When you hear an owl hooting after sunup, that's a good sign that there will be bad weather within twenty-four hours.

out to a place where the water was studded with a growth of small cypress trees. The weather was warm, and on previous trips we had had good luck fishing on the shady side of those bushes. The fish seemed a little indifferent when we first arrived, but we kept juggling minnows around and occasionally pulled in one.

We had been at it a couple of hours when I noticed my companion staring up into the cypress over our heads. "What do you see?" I asked. "A snake?"

"No," he replied, "but watch that spider. He's winding up his web."

I looked until I spotted the medium-sized brown spider. He was really winding web in a hurry, carefully pulling each strand and rolling it into a ball.

"We'd better get out of here," my friend said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because a spider winding up his web in a hurry is a sure sign of rain."

I didn't laugh because I knew him to be a close observer of all outdoor things, and certainly not one given to silly notions. However, when I looked skyward I saw only a few thunderheads to the west and they seemed faraway.

"Let's stay awhile longer," I suggested. "Perhaps the spider got his signals mixed this time."

"They rarely do," he observed, but put a fresh minnow on his hook and kept fishing.

I am sure it was no more than ten minutes before we heard thunder. We juggled our minnows a little longer, then paddled toward the car. Our progress was slow since we had to do a lot of dodging among the bushes. We were still a hundred yards off shore when the rain came. By the time we got to the car the hill was so slick that we couldn't go up it. We got out that night by hiring a fellow to snake us to the top with his tractor.

By watching spiders more closely, I found my friend was right when he observed that they rarely misjudge the weather. When the woodland spider winds his web hurriedly, it's time to seek shelter.

On the afternoon before the opening date of the fall squirrel season, some neighbors and I went to Wolf River Bottom, intending to do some early-morning hunting and some afternoon fishing. The sun was about an hour high when we pitched tent. The weather had been dry for a couple of weeks, so we didn't pitch it with an eye for rain.

One member of our company had gone back three or four hundred yards to pack in some more stuff from the pickup. When he returned, he surveyed our work critically. "Better move that tent," he said, "or we may be sleeping in a pond before morning."

"What makes you think it's going to rain?" we demanded, surveying a cloudless sky.

"Just listen a minute, and you'll know," he replied.

In less than a minute we heard the call of a horned owl floating down from the hills which fringe the bottomland. "There it is," he said. "It's not natural for those fellows to be hooting after sunup or before sundown. When you hear one doing it, that's a good sign that there will be bad weather within twenty-four hours. I heard one at home this morning after the sun was at least an hour high. I first heard this one while I was at the pickup. Bad weather's brewing."

The tent was right at the edge of the bottom, and in a good place to catch most of the water which would come down from a small ravine. We did a little good-natured arguing about moving it, but finally decided to let it stay where it was. That turned out to be a bad decision. Counting on a continuance of dry weather, we hadn't carried a scrap of waterproof bedding. Sometime in the latter part of the night I dreamed of shooting a squirrel which fell into the river. I was wading after him and the water was mighty cold. I awoke and found that the water *was* cold. It was raining, and my bedding was soaked with water which was running across the floor of the tent and out on the other side. My companions were in the same shape. We

Before daylight a rabbit picks the place where he will spend the day.

moved the tent and spent the remainder of the night drinking hot coffee and drying our clothing.

The horned owl has a reputation for wisdom, and he certainly seems to have a pretty good weather eye. No bird of prey hunts very well with wet feathers. They increase his weight and cut down the efficiency of his wings. Then, too, very little small game is out when it is raining. Perhaps at the approach of rain, the owl hunts early and late so he won't have to hunt when his feathers are wet and game is scarce.

Some folks think cold weather is at hand when squirrels begin carrying nuts and acorns to their dens. I think it is a good sign that cold weather is approaching, but it may be days or even weeks away. The squirrel is a thrifty fellow and believes in beginning his storage in plenty of time. The bluejay is a better prophet of immediate coldness. He is a gay fellow who had rather frolic any day than work, and frolic he does, until his work is forced upon him. When he starts carrying acorns and hiding them in knotholes, it's time to have a look at the woodshed or coalbin.

I remember especially two successive mornings of still hunting for squirrels in Big Hatchie Bottom about forty miles above Memphis, Tennessee. Squirrels were feeding on beech mast, and it was easy to get the limit the first morning. There were a few jays around, but they were either pecking very casually at the mast or just sitting around gossiping. When still hunting for squirrels, I usually find them by watching for swinging limbs. On the second morning it seemed that every limb on those beeches was swinging, but not with squirrels. Bluejays were there in droves. They were neither screaming, loafing nor eating, but working silently and swiftly, carrying beech mast to winter storage places. They so confused me that I didn't come near the limit that morning.

It turned cold that afternoon, and that night we had the first heavy frost of the season. Previous to that occasion I had noted that jays never began their harvesting until cold weather was at hand. Since then I have watched them more closely and have learned that when they start gathering food, wintry winds are usually not more than twenty-four hours away.

Whippoorwills seem to have the ability to accurately forecast the approach of a storm. These strange birds nest by the thousands among our hills, and fill the spring nights with their whip-poor-willing. They do not seem to mind the rain, and will keep calling on a rainy night. But when a wind or electrical storm is in the offing, they become birds of silence.

One spring night we had company out from the city. We spread supper under the trees, and as we ate, our guests especially noticed the calling of dozens of whippoorwills. By the time we had finished eating there wasn't a one to be heard. That was so unusual that I called attention to it. A few minutes later I noticed distant flashes of lightning in the southwest. Two hours later the cloud was up, bringing a severe electrical storm and strong winds which felled trees and did considerable damage in the surrounding country.

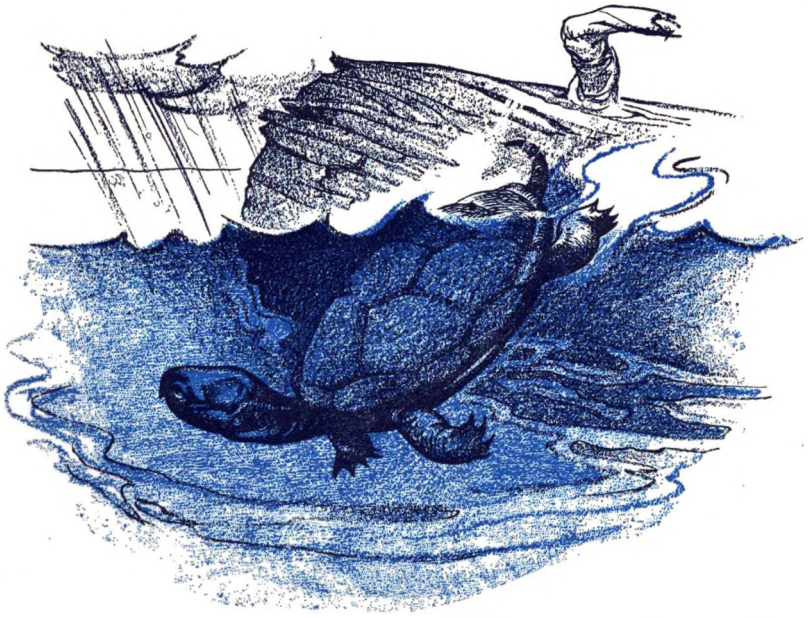
That was my first introduction to whippoorwills as storm forecasters. I discussed the experience with others, and found some who had long been familiar with the night-bird's silence at the approach of stormy weather. One old gentleman told me that he had heard from his grandfather that, because of the whippoorwill's storm-forecasting ability, this bird was highly esteemed by the Indians who once lived in this section. I could not verify that, but I do know from my own observations that the old bird seems to know something about the weather, and will certainly end his songfest at the approach of a storm.

To most fishermen turtles sunning on logs or on shore are familiar sights. When those sun-loving rascals slide into the water for no apparent reason it is a pretty good sign that rain is approaching. That sounds rather silly—just as if they were sliding in to the water to keep from getting wet. However, I have talked with experienced fishermen who have noted the tendency of the turtle to disappear beneath the surface just before a rain. I do not know his reason for it. Surely, he is not afraid of the rain. Perhaps it is because he is out mostly for sunshine, and instinctively knows that it won't shine when it's raining. I have saved myself from several good soakings by heading for shelter when turtles head for the bottom of the creek or lake.

There are many other things of the woods which seem to have the ability to foresee the weather. An unusual amount of activity among squirrels at dawn is a pretty good sign that the wind will rise later in the day. The whining of a screech owl at mid-day is an indication that the following night will be a bad one. A steady chorus of katydids zip-zipping at dark is usually a sign of cloudless skies throughout the night. Bad weather is usually brewing when cranes move restlessly up and down streams or across lakes.

The man who is camping deep in the woods usually is out of touch with the nation's weather bureaus, yet the weather ahead is very important to him. The success or failure of many hunting or fishing trips depends on the weather. If a fellow has a fair idea of what's ahead he can make plans accordingly.

These woodland forecasters are not on anybody's payroll, and I don't understand their methods, but they are certainly worth watching. The weather is vital to their very existence, therefore they are always on the alert for any change.



When turtles slide into the water for no apparent reason it is a sign that rain is approaching.

MORE THAN ONCE BEFORE WE HAVE BEEN THREATENED BY THE SAVAGE WARRIORS OF ASIA. THIS IS THE STORY OF GENGHIS KHAN'S ABLEST GENERAL.

by FRANK B. HUGGINS

Sabutai the Valiant

BUT for a stroke of fate, or the divine intervention of Almighty God sickened at bloodshed, the whole of Europe might have bowed to him. In over sixty battles he had never been defeated; and under his inspired leadership the hordes of his terrible master Genghis Khan overran the lands of Imperial Cathay, Korea, Persia, Hungary, and crushed the Knights Templar, the Russians and Poles. He was a general's general, the most courageous of all Mongol warriors, the finest of tacticians. Of all the Golden Horde under the great Khakhan, he was the greatest.

His name was Sabutai, known as Baghatur the Valiant.

Nothing is known of his origin. History says that he came from the Reindeer People, and it is written that he was one of the four paladins of Temujin, later to be known to a terrified world as Genghis Khan. In the early battles of the Yakka Mongols, he rode beside the young Temujin against the forces of Prester John.

And on one occasion he sucked the blood from an arrow wound that Temujin had suffered, although he believed that the arrow was poisoned; and on another, during a campaign when his master had gone to sleep on the ground, he sat up all night holding his cloak to shield him from the snow which was falling. The Khakhan valued him as a friend and as the greatest of his Orloks, the generals. It was Genghis who termed him the Unfailing.

There were four paladins of Temujin, and they were known as his hounds. A chronicler of the day says that Temujin held them on iron chains, that their skulls were of brass, their teeth hewn from rock, their tongues shaped like awls, and their hearts of iron. In battle they carried curved swords in place of horsewhips, and rode in the forefront scattering the enemy like wolves among sheep. The four were Sabutai, Borgurchi, Chepe Noyon and Jelmi, all destined for the highest honors. But none lived as long or served more faithfully than Sabutai the Valiant.

With Persia, China and the Mongolian steppes prostrate under the pounding hoofs of his bloody hordes, Genghis Khan in 1222 turned back to the Gobi Desert, whence he had started, to enjoy the fruits of his conquests. In the fertile plains between Karakorum and Samarkand he pitched his tents and assembled his Orloks. To Sabutai and Chepe Noyon he gave the task of pursuing the Kharesmian Shah and destroying forever his empire.

"Do not come back until you have taken him prisoner," Genghis said. "If he flees before you, follow him through his domains, wherever he may turn. Spare every town which surrenders, but destroy ruthlessly anyone who gets in your way and offers resistance."

Sabutai and Chepe Noyon, with a force of thirty thousand, set out on this monumental task. Small as this army was, it was remarkable in its organization and equipment, and surpassed anything that the world then had. The horde consisted mainly of cavalry, with a small group of heavy artillery which carried its catapults, mangonels, and the new Chinese invention, cannon, on yaks and camels. Each rider had three spare horses, and his weapons were designed both for close combat and for fighting from a distance. In his individual arsenal, the Mongol warrior listed a bow with two quivers, in which he carried various types of arrows, a javelin, a scimitar or a battleaxe, and a lasso, which he used with deadly skill. He was dressed in lacquered leather armor, and on his head he wore a bronze helmet. Organization was in groups of ten, with the *tuman,* a force of ten thousand, approximating the present-day division. Discipline was inflexible, and death the penalty for turning back in battle,

For six days Sabutai retreated, then suddenly wheeled his armies

leaving a wounded comrade, or carelessly losing equipment.

Relentlessly the two Orloks drove the army across the Caucasus Mountains almost to the walls of Eastern Rome, and then drew back to inundate the plains of southern Russia in hot pursuit of tribes that dared refuse to bow the knee. Once in the green plains of the Crimea, his quarry having fled to the north, Sabutai stayed the pursuit and turned his horses loose to browse on the lush grass. To Genghis he sent a message that he had chased the Shah to the shores of the Caspian, only to find that he had sailed away to an unknown destination.

Surrounded by his victorious armies, Sabutai settled for the winter in the Russian steppes. To his camp from every corner of the Eastern world came caravan after caravan of greedy traders paying tribute to the mighty Khan of Khans, whose despotic rule kept peace along the ancient routes of trade. And it was while he rested in his *yurt* that merchants of Venice, who had earlier settled in the Russian lands along the Black Sea, came to Sabutai. Hungry for profit, they betrayed their Christian brothers of the Western nations. Sabutai the warrior detested these Judases, but Sabutai the general wanted information, and the Venetians sold him the secrets of the half of the world that had not yet felt the Mongols feet on its neck.

The Western world, they told him, was torn with dissension. The Vicar of Christ on Earth, Pope Gregory IX, and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Frederick II, were tearing that world apart to uphold their pretensions to universal sovereignty. Even the Crusades no longer brought content to the people who were beaten into the dust by taxes and the constant demands of their overlords for military and other feudal services.

Sabutai listened to their words and studied the maps the Venetians brought him. His horses grew fat and sleek; and during the winter equipment was cleaned and readied for the spring. Sabutai took counsel with his officers.

"This Europe," he said, "is ruled by a hundred men, all warring one against the other. I think that come the spring we shall revel in their lands."

All was ready for the march across the Russian steppes into the fertile plain of Hungary, when out of the blue there came a messenger from Genghis, with orders that Sabutai should return immediately to Samarkand and make a full report of his victories. Sabutai gave up his plans for conquest and turned his army back, while he rode on ahead, stopping only to change horses and eat, and in a week he had covered the

about and fell on the unwary Hungarians with all his strength.

thousand-odd miles that separated him from his master.

But he never forgot Europe, and while he feasted with Genghis in his tent of cloth-of-gold, he told of the information he had received. Genghis listened to his paladin and approved of his plan, which visualized the conquest of Europe over a period of sixteen years; but he was more interested in hearing of his Orlok's raid. And so, curbing his impatience, Sabutai related how he had covered over four thousand miles and subjugated a dozen peoples, leading his small force over snowy passes and green fields. The Khakhan was delighted.

Before Sabutai's plan for the conquest of Europe would be effected, many years were to pass. Genghis had other work for his great Orlok, not the least of which was the training of his sons in warfare. Sabutai, as always, loyally did as he was directed.

In August, 1227, Genghis Khan, in the plenitude of his victories and at the height of his power, died at the age of sixty-six. He was burned on the summit of Mount Burkan-Kaldun, and Sabutai was among the small and select group that put him to rest.

Ogdai Khan, who succeeded Genghis as leader of all the Mongol hordes, ordered Sabutai to destroy the Chinese Kingdom of Kin, and then advance and conquer the Koreans. Such commands were the breath of life to the old Orlok. Kin and Korea bowed their necks into the Mongol yoke and their ancient wealth fell plunder to the Golden Horde.

By 1236, all the Eastern world lay prostrate before the Mongol Khan. Now Sabutai advanced his plan of European conquest; Ogdai approved, as had his father before him. Under the titular command of Batu, grandson of Genghis, Sabutai was given the task of laying the whole of Europe tribute at the feet of Ogdai Khan. Batu, who had brought stable Mongol rule to the Russian people, was happy in the luxury of his savage court and wanted to lead no warlike expedition. But Ogdai knew that the great Orlok would be the real leader, and that his nephew's luxury-weakened men would be whipped into fighting shape.

Sabutai's Venetian spies had kept him well informed about the state of European nations. Europe was now, more than ever, torn asunder by the quarrels of Barons and Dukes, Kings and Pope. Only the danger of the immediate present held the thoughts of the populace. It knew nothing of the Mongol terror.

News of the Mongol expedition reached the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II. He wrote to his brother kings, begging them to open their eyes to the folly of their ways, imploring them to combine their strength and

Illustrated by JOHN RICHARD FLANAGAN

Genghis termed him the Unfailing.

meet the coming onslaught of the Mongol menace.

The Pope, too, was frightened, remembering the conquest of Caucasian Georgia by Sabutai almost fifteen years before. He wrote letters to the Georgian Queen, telling of his sympathy and concern for her people, and in letters to the King of Hungary, Bela IV, he begged him to prepare for battle against the heathen demons from the wastes of Asia. He proclaimed a Crusade against them, and sanctified it by giving its followers remission of their sins, past and to come. But Europe was too far sunk in the apathy which was the result of too many unsuccessful Crusades. Only a handful of men and petty rulers responded.

EARLY in spring of 1241, Sabutai advanced to the slaughter, concentrating the troops under his command in the region of the eastern Carpathians. He was going to force the passes that still protected Europe from the Eastern mobs, and then march through the fertile fields of Hungary straight to its medieval capital, the town of Gran, northeast of modern Budapest. Gran once in his hands, the way to Europe, to Paris and to Rome, would lie unobstructed to his swift advance.

Sabutai was always cautious. He had no intention of marching his invincible cavalry into the forests and the hills of eastern Europe where they could not use the mobile tactics that had crushed every army that they had ever met. He divided his army into four spearheads of attack. With three of these he marched to battle on the Hungarian plain. The fourth *tuman* he put under the command of a young man he had trained in years past, and in whom he saw qualities of leadership so lacking in Batu. This was Kaidu, son of Batu, and a great-grandson of Genghis Khan. Kaidu rode north to protect the right flank.

Early in March, Kaidu's army crossed the Vistula into Poland and in a surprise attack destroyed the Polish forces and marched on Cracow and Breslau, which he captured and wantonly destroyed.

Henry, Duke of Silesia, was one of the petty sovereigns who had taken heed of the warnings of his liege lord, the Emperor Frederick II. Hastily assembling an army of knights and heavily armed infantry, he marched with the Knights Templars and the Hospitallers, to the aid of the Polish armies under Boleslas and Miecislas. Only a short march away to the north the army of good King Wenceslaus of Bohemia was hastening to the aid of its Christian brothers.

Inferior in numbers but strong in their belief that none could stand before them, Kaidu on April 9 attacked the Polish armies before the allies could combine their forces, and inflicted a terrible defeat on the flower of European knighthood. After the battle the exultant victors filled nine sacks with the ears of the fallen enemies. This gruesome trophy was sent to Sabutai as proof of their victory.

A Swedish observer of this battle fled to safety across the Baltic, and his account of the savagery of the Mongols so terrified the Swedish people that even their fishermen were afraid to put to sea to attend the annual herring fishing off the coast of England. English writers of the time say that as a result herring were so abundant in England that even country markets sold them forty to fifty for a shilling, a price never before nor since so low.

Meanwhile, Sabutai with his three divisions advanced into Hungary. Two of these divisions he used to form his flanks in the form of a bow. Through the middle of this formation, like an arrow, rode Sabutai himself with the third Mongol column.

He never left anything to chance. The time of departure, routes to be traversed, rate of march, location and mobility of supplies, all these matters were established in advance by the great Orlok, and communicated to his generals. His three divisions were to meet and open battle near the town of Gran, where his spies had told him the main body of the Europeans was to be drawn up to await the Mongels.

On March 15 the vanguard of the horde reached the Danube. Two days later Sabutai arrived at the head of the center column, his *tuman* of ten thousand guards of the *corps d'élite,* the flower of the Mongol armies.

The Danube lay athwart his path. To cross it under the direct fire of the Christian enemy would have been to sacrifice his men without any compensating advantage. Sabutai never forgot the orders of his great master, Genghis Khan himself, never to put the men in danger without an overwhelming compensation of advantage. Because of this, Mongol losses were always nominal.

Here Sabutai displayed his masterly grasp of strategy, something hardly conceived of by European commanders before the Sixteenth Century. The armies of Europe relied on the weight of their armor for their victories, but the Mongols never came to close quarters before they had first beaten down the enemy by their arrow-fire and unceasing forays of their light-armed cavalry using armor-piercing arrows and javelins. The effect on slow-moving foot soldiery and clumsy mounted knights was devastating.

Sabutai considered the situation and decided against forcing the Danube and fighting a major battle with the river at his rear. Instead he retreated toward his base, and by this movement enticed the Hungarian army away from the Danube and from any chance of reinforcement. In retreating, he also deliberately gave the Hungarians the mistaken impression that he was fleeing before their might. The Mongol army drew back slowly, with the gleeful enemy in hot pursuit. For six days it retreated and had barely covered half the distance to Sabutai's base at Muncacz. Suddenly, Sabutai wheeled his armies about and in the middle of the night fell on the unwary Hungarians with all his strength.

By noon the next day the Hungarian army was in full flight, two thirds of its force dead on the field of a terrible battle. Bela IV, the unfortunate King of Hungary, fled to the south into the Balkans and troops from Sabutai's victorious horde relentlessly chased him far south along the shores of the Adriatic. Only their recall to join the main force saved him from ignominious capture and death.

The day, a black one for Western civilization, was April 9, 1241. To the north, in Poland, on the same day, Kaidu had gained his great victory.

After the defeat of Bela IV, Hungary was occupied by Sabutai, though Batu, his nominal chief, took all the credit. Later, Batu had the temerity to complain that his services, his deeds of valor and his conquests in the Western world had never met their true reward.

"Little have you to complain about," Kublai Khan scornfully told him. "All your victories were won by Sabutai Baghadur."

But Sabutai was not of the blood of Genghis Khan, and by Mongol law they alone could rule and hold the Mongol captured world under their control. Sabutai led their armies, but he was not destined to rule, nor is there any evidence to show that he desired more than to serve the descendants of his friend, the great Khan.

Sabutai settled in the Hungarian plains to spend the summer of 1241 and to plan for the coming year's campaign into still other European kingdoms. Word came to him of Kaidu's successes. The first part of Sabutai's plan of conquest was completed. Soon he would advance again. Paris and Rome lay ahead of the conquering hoofs of his armies. None could stand in their way.

And now the dice of fate rattled in the cup of time. In the Gobi, Ogdai Khan died. The law of Genghis Khan prescribed that all the Mongol chiefs and generals should have a hand in the choice of his successor. And so to far-away Karagorum, Batu and Sabutai were summoned to a *kuriltai,* a conference of the leaders. Sabutai must leave his conquests in the fertile west and march again across the deserts and steppes to fulfill the wishes of the long-dead greatest of all lords.

Sabutai never questioned the summons, but Batu had no stomach for the Mongol *kuriltai.* Here in Hungary and the Russian steppes he ruled as a sovereign lord, paying little but lip homage to the Khakhan in Karakorum. Eldest son of the eldest son of Genghis, for all that he was only the eldest son of a bastard and forever ineligible to head the Golden Horde. Batu said he suffered from the gout, that he could not sit a saddle for all of the six thousand long miles. Let Sabutai obey; he would stay behind in Russia.

"My Lord," the old Orlok said, "I am as anxious as you to continue this conquest. But the law of the *Yasak* as written by your grandfather is inflexible. You must take part in the *kuriltai.* Not to do so would be to split the unity of the Mongols."

Batu grumbled, but before the stubborn insistence of the great general he finally acceded. History records that he attended the *kuriltai,* even though he delayed it for six years while he dawdled back to the Gobi. Sabutai rode on ahead.

Again the horde was mustered on the plains of Hungary, but this time not in battle array. Only small scouting bands were left behind to gather information from the many spies that Sabutai always employed to bring him intelligence of the Western world.

And then one day the Mongols were gone. Europe could not believe in its deliverance from the peril. No one could understand why they had turned their victorious backs from the threshold of a terror-stricken Europe. But gone they were, and in every town and village the church bells rang in jubilant thanksgiving, and the people prayed, "From the fury of the Mongol hordes, good Lord, deliver us." Even today, this forms part of the litany of the Eastern Church in many Christian lands.

Sabutai returned to the Gobi. Twice Europe had cowered in fear before him and his conquering armies. Twice fate had raised its hands and waved him back from the Christian countries. Now he was old and tired. His plan for European conquest was apparently forgotten in the domestic squabbles of the Mongols. Chepe Noyon, his old friend and companion, and the other "hounds of the Khan" were gone now. A score of years before he had buried his great master, Genghis, Khan of Khans.

The old Orlok asked leave to return to his *yurt,* there to live out his life among his herds and wives. For the last time, the Mongol horde rode past him, dipping their yak tail banners in salute to the greatest of generals, Sabutai the Valiant, the Unfailing. Sabutai, the conqueror of Cathay, of Persia and the Russian steppes of Georgia, Hungary and other lands, rode away to a well-earned rest.

He died peacefully in bed, we are told, in his simple *yurt* on the banks of the Yuli. He was the last of the old Mongols, and he had ridden with the young Temujin when he was in his early teens. He was over seventy when he died.

Had not the dice of fate twice fallen as they did to recall Sabutai Baghadur from the borders of Europe, he and his Mongol horde would have sat on the thrones of Emperor and Pope. Edward Gibbons, the historian of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" said that: "Had the Tartars undertaken the siege of Constantinople, it must have yielded to the fate of Peking, Samarkand and Baghdad." Would Paris have fared better?

The Man Who Laughed

AN AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER SEEKS A MATERIAL WITNESS IN POSTWAR VIENNA—AND TAKES PART IN A BITTER DRAMA.

THE gray light of the dawn seeped in soft, flabby blotches through the window of the compartment when Warren awoke. He sat up in his berth and yawned, and then his hand went by old habit toward the attaché case that was propped up beside his pillow, sleeping, as it were, together with him. He quickly unlocked it and ran through its contents as he had done before, and as before, his hand hesitated for the fraction of a second when he reached the photo that was pasted on one of the sheets well in the middle of the file.

It was the photo of the Officer. Warren knew exactly who the man was, and he knew that he had never served in any military outfit; yet in his mind he always called him the Officer. Even when he closed his eyes, he saw the picture before him, formal, with a Fuehrer portrait in the background, the Officer himself in the black uniform of the S.S.-Elite Guards, the silver-trimmed peaked cap with the little silver death's head propped up high, the riding cane in his hand, the eyes slanted downward in a cold and curious smile, as if he had just used the cane on some prisoner, which he probably had. He was the kind of person who wouldn't know how to use a riding cane on a horse, but very well on men. He was an underling in charge of other underlings. He was the Officer. Warren hated him very much.

The "Mozart" ground to a stop, the cars shunting against one another, and there was a distant whistle like the tearing of silk. Then the train started up again, rolling slowly through some half-demolished blocks of houses that had their dirty-red backs toward the embankment, as if the city were turning away from the newcomer. After that there was a factory district that was almost untouched, and then came some totally destroyed tenement areas, rubble flats with staircases suspended in midair, and doorways leading into nothingness, and the murky sky hanging over them like a corrugated iron roof.

The West-Bahnhof was also heavily damaged. Parts of the platforms were missing; long stretches of wall were shored up by heavy braces, and the bare steel ribs of the shattered glass roof formed a pattern like a spider web against the sky. There were a few sallow-looking railroad men hanging around in the half-dark. When Warren dropped his cigarette butt, one of them, a small fellow with the brick-red cap of a stationmaster, who was running across the tracks swinging a lantern, wheeled sharply and picked up the butt and placed it carefully in a little metal container, then ran on, swinging his lantern.

Warren had a sick feeling in his stomach as he looked after him. He had seen waiters and chauffeurs and even policemen diving after the precious butts; they did it in Berlin and in Munich and in Nuremberg and all over Germany. But this wasn't the Reich, after all; this was Vienna, and somehow he had expected people to be different here. Well, they were not. It had probably been foolish to expect them to be. He took up his attaché case and his Gladstone and went to the desk of the R.T.O. to have his official ticket stamped and ask for a jeep to his hotel. . . .

"The name of the man is Kleitz," Warren said. He was sitting in the visitor's chair before the large baroque desk of Dr. Schierling, the minister of the interior. Dr. Schierling had the flesh-colored button of an electric hearing aid in his ear, and Warren's German was rather poor, so that he had to speak very loudly to make himself understood across the enormous expanse of the desk; it sounded almost like two neighbors arguing across a street. Beside the desk stood a girl, playing with her locket and appraising Warren from time to time with cool, incurious eyes. The girl was dark and slim and withdrawn, and she wore a white office smock that made her look like a prim young nurse.

"I remember Commissar Kleitz very well," she said in a low, husky voice. "I was his secretary during the critical four years. He was in charge of Aryanization and special licenses. One day, early in 1945, he disappeared. He didn't just run away or fall sick

by **ALLAN RAPHAEL**

Illustrated by Ray Houlihan

"A girl of her kind," he thought wryly. What kind of girl was she, after all?

or go back to Berlin. He disappeared. Those were turbulent days; the Russians had taken Budapest and stood before Pressburg, and there were food riots in Tullen and Wiener-Neustadt; and the trains were jampacked with German officers in field gray and the black of the S.S.; and in all that confusion Commissar Kleitz disappeared. He left the office one day at noon and did not return; but he had not gone to his apartment, either; nor had he packed as much as a handkerchief or a toothbrush. He just disappeared. Nobody has seen him since."

"That's about what we know, back in Nuremberg," Warren said. "We want the man, though. We want him badly. You probably know that he was not a very good boy; he drank a lot and he stole a lot; he really belongs in the prisoners' dock before one of our Military Tribunals. But we don't want him for his own sake. He wasn't a big enough man for that. We want him mainly as a material witness against his former boss, S.S.-Colonel von Todt."

The girl gave him a brief glance. Her eyes held a dancing light, and then they became flat again. Warren said: "Von Todt, you see, was not a small man. He was the Gray Eminence of Hitler's court. He had the ear of the Fuehrer, and he was friendly with Goering and Himmler and Goebbels and everybody who counted. It would have been easy for him to be a general or even a field marshal, but he didn't care for the trappings. He loved the power for its own sake. He didn't care for money or for women or even for uniform. He cared only for power."

He paused briefly to light a cigarette. He offered the pack to Dr. Schierling and the girl, but the girl shook her head and said, "Thank you," in that high-school English of hers. Dr. Schierling accepted quickly, almost greedily, and Warren gave him a light and watched him as he deeply inhaled the smoke, floating, as it were, with his whole being on the slate-colored fumes. He felt a quick stab of pity and decided he would forget the pack on the desk when leaving. He said aloud: "Today, von Todt is a defendant in our case against the S.S.-Main Economic and Administrative Office, what you probably know as the Pohl case. He is not a big-shot any more. He is just a thin old gentleman who complains about the food and the quarters and the guards, and hasn't done anything. We have a case against him, but it isn't a very strong case. Therefore we need Kleitz, or at least any facts we can cull from Kleitz' files. We want to know what he did, and we want to know whether he did it on his own hook or on orders from Colonel von Todt; this is the purpose of my trip."

"I hope you find what you are looking for," the minister said politely. "If anybody can help you, Fräulein Scheller can. She knows the files like her own hand." He glanced down at the cigarette between his fingers and noticed that nearly half of it was gone, and he put it out and opened the drawer and dropped the butt in it. Then he half-rose, all wing collar and pince-nez, and said, "It was a pleasure, Mr. Horne," and returned to the papers on his desk. . . .

It was still gray outside, a dead, bleary grayness, as if the sky were a half of a big zinc barrel covering the world. The raindrops slanted against

the windows, hitting the glass with a row of soft explosions, and ran off in blurry sheets of wetness. Warren pushed back the pad before him and reclined in his chair. The pad was empty, except for the drawings of a face, two airplanes, and a row of five or six flags. The flags were of European nations, drawn elaborately and colored with red and blue pencil; the airplanes were crude and not quite symmetric; the face was that of a woman, and it resembled a little Fräulein Scheller's.

WARREN looked at his handiwork, and there was a deep crease between his eyes. He said: "We've found very little, Miss Scheller."

"We have found nothing," the girl said. Her voice was precise and colorless. Warren said: "We've more than that right now in Nuremberg. I hope we'll be luckier tomorrow."

"We shall find nothing tomorrow, either," the girl said. There was no triumph in her voice, just a dead certainty that was the more certain because it was so indifferent. She got up and slipped out of the smock and put on her coat. Warren caught a glimpse of her figure in a tight purple dress as she changed. He said: "You're quitting at five o'clock, here in the ministry?"

"Yes. At five o'clock."

"I thought it was six," he said idly. He watched her as she arranged her hair before the little mirror near the entrance. He said, "You don't use much lipstick here, do you?"

"We use it exactly as much as anywhere else," she said. "Only it is hard to come by. Everything is hard to come by, these days. A kilo of bread costs you twenty-five schillings, and a kilo of lard two hundred schillings. When you know that girls like me make two, three hundred schillings a month, you can imagine what life is like for us."

"Those are black-market prices, I suppose."

She turned toward him and smiled. It was the first time that he saw her smile. The smile lighted her face up like the soft yellow light of a chandelier that somebody sets down in a dark room. It was gay and sad at the same time; it made her look very lovely in a sorrowful sort of way. She said: "We would all be dead if it weren't for the black market. You know that, don't you?"

"I'm sorry," he muttered.

"Don't worry about it," the girl said lightly. "There isn't much you Americans have to worry about, anyway." She put on her Basque cap, which was slate-colored like her coat, said, "Good night," and went to the door. Warren, in a sudden impulse, got up and went over to her.

"It is raining," he said.

"I noticed that much."

"You're a very observant child. What I meant to say, it's raining, and you don't have an umbrella and not much of a coat. You'll get wet through and through, and possibly get sick, and we won't be able to finish our work."

"We are tough, these days, in Europe," she said with that small sorrowful smile of hers. "We don't take sick so easily. We can't afford to, you see."

"And I can't afford to lose the secretary of Herr Kleitz," he said. "I have the jeep down in the street, and I'm hungry, and I don't know a soul in Vienna. How about you taking me to a place where we can eat 'black' and talk about our case? I mean, as a favor for me."

She hesitated for a moment.

"No," she said then. "I can't. I must try to rustle up some of my rations, and if I don't line up now, I won't get them."

"But if I tried to make up for that—"

She gave him a long, slanted look. He stood close before her, and he noticed that her eyes were not hazel, as he had thought they were, but also slate-colored, with little golden specks in them. Her clothes smelled faintly of old perfume and of dampness and of woman. He drew her close and kissed her. Her mouth was cool and unyielding, but she did not push him back. When he released her, she looked at him with large, serious eyes. She said: "Did you mention that Herr Kleitz was a bad boy?"

"Yes," he said. "What's your first name, baby?"

"Edith. . . . It seems you are not a very good boy, either, Mr. Horne. If I go with you—"

"I'll behave. Is it a deal, Edith?"

"All right," she said, and there was again that little smile of hers. "I shall take a chance with you. In the interest of our work, Mr. Horne."

"That's understood," he said. She went to his desk and turned out the light. In the dark she brushed by him, and he felt again like drawing this beautiful, sorrowful thing toward him, and he hated himself for it. He said brusquely, "Let's go," and took his field coat from the rack and went out in the corridor.

IT was night now, but the sky had cleared and there was a ruddy full moon trailing along the high white roadway of the stars. Its light came from behind the small baroque church of St. Balthasar in Grinzing, and made its steeple look like an upside-down onion, a large black onion whose point thrust upward into the pale glow above. Warren and Edith Scheller sat near the small window in Carl Kaserer's Heurigen inn. Before the window, the large tuft of fir branches on its pole, which served as a sign that wine of this year's vintage was being sold here, rocked gently to and fro in the cool breeze. The walls of the low-ceilinged room showed some traces of old murals, and there were painted wooden statues of St. Anna and St. Barbara standing lonely and gaudy in two shallow niches in the wall. The electric current had been cut off a few minutes ago, and Frau Kaserer had brought in a kerosene lamp and placed it on the table. Warren thought that the soft yellowish light made Fräulein Scheller look like a little saint herself, a dark-faced little saint from some southern city, perhaps from the holy city of Rome. He leaned back in his chair, full of good food and the pleasant Grinzing wine. He felt light and almost happy, and then he remembered that he would have to leave this city in a few days, and he waved the thought away like a pesky fly. He heard Edith Scheller's voice as if it came from far away:

"REMINDED me of my father," she said. "He was a university professor, you know. Brain surgery. In 1942 he had to join the Party to keep his job. He did it for my sake, although I myself joined nothing, not even the Hitler Jugend. . . . After the war he was then suspended, and that disheartened him so that he died, in 1946. My mother had died already a couple of years before the *Umbruch*. . . . Since that time I have lived alone. I got used to it. There is really nothing wrong in living alone, once you get used to it."

"I'd say there's nothing right about it," Warren said. "Perhaps if you're a great writer or scientist, but not if you're a young girl; a very pretty young girl, if I may say so."

"Thank you," she said and smiled. "You have a good line. Most Americans have a good line, I've noticed."

"You know a lot of Americans, don't you?"

"I've known a few. They came like you to check up on certain files, run through certain records. One comes to talk—"

"And then?"

"Well, most of them didn't even bother to take me out for dinner, to be truthful. They asked me right away to come to their billets."

"And you said no, of course."

"I said no most of the time," she said in a small voice. "But you don't believe me anyway, do you?"

"I'm just wondering why I do believe you," he said. "But now let's go. The rain has stopped, but it still seems pretty close and sticky in here."

"Thank you," she said and smiled. "You have a good line. Most Americans have a good line, I've noticed."

Edith Scheller rose obediently. Warren helped her into her coat and went out into the kitchen and talked with Frau Kaserer and paid her and added a pack of cigarettes. When he came back to his jeep, Edith sat in the front seat, huddled into a dark little bundle, shivering in the chill wind that came down from the St. Leopolds Berg. Warren took off the brake without switching on the ignition and let the car roll down the long turning loops of Grinzinger Strasse. On a gentle grade of the road the car slowed down and came to a stop. The moon had risen and was now very bright and silvery, its light rolling down the slopes of the vine-clad hills like white, sparkling wine, itself. Somewhere in the distance a dog howled. Warren said without looking at the girl: "You've got some scenery here, you have. It's quite pretty, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said. "I am cold, though. Would you mind taking me home, please?"

"Sure," he said, but he did not move. His eyes lingered for a few more moments on the chaste picture outside. He said: "You're in an awful hurry to get home, aren't you?"

She did not reply. He turned toward her and drew her close. She resisted a little, and then she went all limp in his arm, and when he found her mouth there was only a yielding, trembling softness inside the damp coat. Warren heard the thumping of his heart, loud as a steam hammer. He said thickly: "You're very sweet, you know, Edith."

"Sure," she said. She looked at him, her eyes bright in the dark, and then she said in a thin, scratchy voice: "I suppose you told that before to another girl, back in America, and you're now engaged to her, or even married. Are you not?"

"No," he said. "But you'd get the same answer from any man whom you ask in this situation. What matters is that I like you and that I hate to leave this city since I've met you, and that's the truth. . . . How about driving over to your place and having a whisky and talking a little, somewhere where it isn't so cold?"

"My place is not much warmer," she said. "Besides, I don't have any whisky."

"If it is only that I can drive over to my hotel and get a bottle. Come on, Edith. The night is still young and so are we."

She hesitated for a moment, breathing hard, and then she said, "All right," and Warren clutched in and drove to his hotel in Alser Strasse. The streets were narrow and badly lit, and from time to time there were big piles of rubble half-blocking the way. When Warren drew up at the Hotel Weisser Hahn, the girl spoke to him again.

"Mr. Horne," she said, "I hope you haven't forgotten what you told me in the office, have you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said, bewildered and without understanding. The girl smiled faintly and said in her beautiful low voice that had not the slightest trace of embarrassment in it: "You mentioned that you would make up for the rations on which I missed out today. I do hope you will think of it. We are too poor here in Austria to be large-minded, you see."

"Sure," he said. "What would you like, a dozen candy bars or a pack or two of cigarettes?"

"I am afraid that wouldn't be enough," she said, tight-lipped. "Today was the deadline for a lot of ration coupons. I would have to have about three cartons of cigarettes."

"THREE!" he repeated, dumfounded. "Three cartons! What would you do with three cartons of cigarettes?"

"I just need them," she said. Her voice trembled a little. "I need them to get the equivalent of my rations in the black market. I am sorry if it is more than you expected, Mr. Horne. Of course, you could go back on your promise, but in that case I shall have nothing to eat for the next fourteen days. I shall not starve, I suppose, and I still can drink water. Water is free of charge."

"Tell me more stop-press news," Warren muttered. In the back of his mind he made a quick estimate of his stock of cigarettes. He had about three cartons up in his room, maybe

three cartons and a couple of packs; well, two packs would tide him over for a day or so, and he could drive over to the Waehring P.X. during tomorrow's lunch hour and try to talk the manager into giving him his twelve packs for next week's ration. And then it occurred to him that those three cartons were worth about twenty dollars from one American to the other, over here in the E.T.O., and he thought of offering the girl twenty-five dollars instead of the cigarettes. But that was impossible, of course. One didn't offer money to a girl of her kind.

A girl of her kind, he thought wryly. What kind of a girl was she, after all? He had thought for a few moments that she was different, but of course she was not. She was as little different from the German Fräuleins as the butt-gatherers here were different from their German brethren. A little plunder meant to all of them more than clean hands and a clean shirt. He had been a sap to think that any of them was different.

THE desk clerk smirked as he handed him the key to his room and jerked his head toward the girl in the jeep. Warren felt like hitting him in the face. He went up to his room and found the whisky and the cigarettes and went down again and handed the package to the girl. The girl said dryly, "Thank you," and then they drove silently to the address on the Wieden that she had given him.

The building was one of those expensive and graceless monstrosities of the late nineties, with plenty of brass and stucco and deep, forbidding windows. For a moment Warren thought of saying good night at the door, but then he remembered the cold and lonely evenings he had spent in other cities like this, and he shrugged his shoulders and followed her.

The room where she led him was like the house. It had a white stucco ceiling, and a lot of old-fashioned, slightly shabby furniture, and a Trumpeter of Saeckingen in cast-iron, standing on a pedestal, with a clock suspended on his trumpet. It was very cold. Warren kept his coat on, but the girl took hers off and hung it in a wall closet that was crammed with clothes and exhaled the same faint perfume smell he had noticed on her, back in the office. She went to the kitchen and returned with two liquor glasses, and then she opened the drawer of a tallboy and rummaged in it for quite a while. Warren heard metallic clicking that sounded almost like the chambers of a revolver being spun around. For an instant he felt something like panic brushing by him, and then he smiled inwardly. This was Vienna, Austria, he told himself. This was not Cairo or Casablanca in a Hollywood B-picture. The girl pushed the drawer shut and went again to the kitchen and brought in some American crackers.

"Please, help yourself," she said. "This is a poor house, as you may have noticed."

Warren muttered, "Thank you," and sat down and poured the whisky. The amber-colored liquid burned a sharp trail down his throat, and he felt at once the heat spreading down his middle like molten lead. He poured a second drink and finished it, and sat a little, his hands dangling between his knees, staring down at the pattern of the rug at his feet. It was a nice Persian rug with a lot of crimson and yellow in it, and a thin green line around its border. The girl had not drunk more than a finger's breadth of her first drink. She sat on the edge of her chair like a scared child in a strange house. She watched him quietly for a minute or two, and then she said: "Penny for your thoughts, Warren."

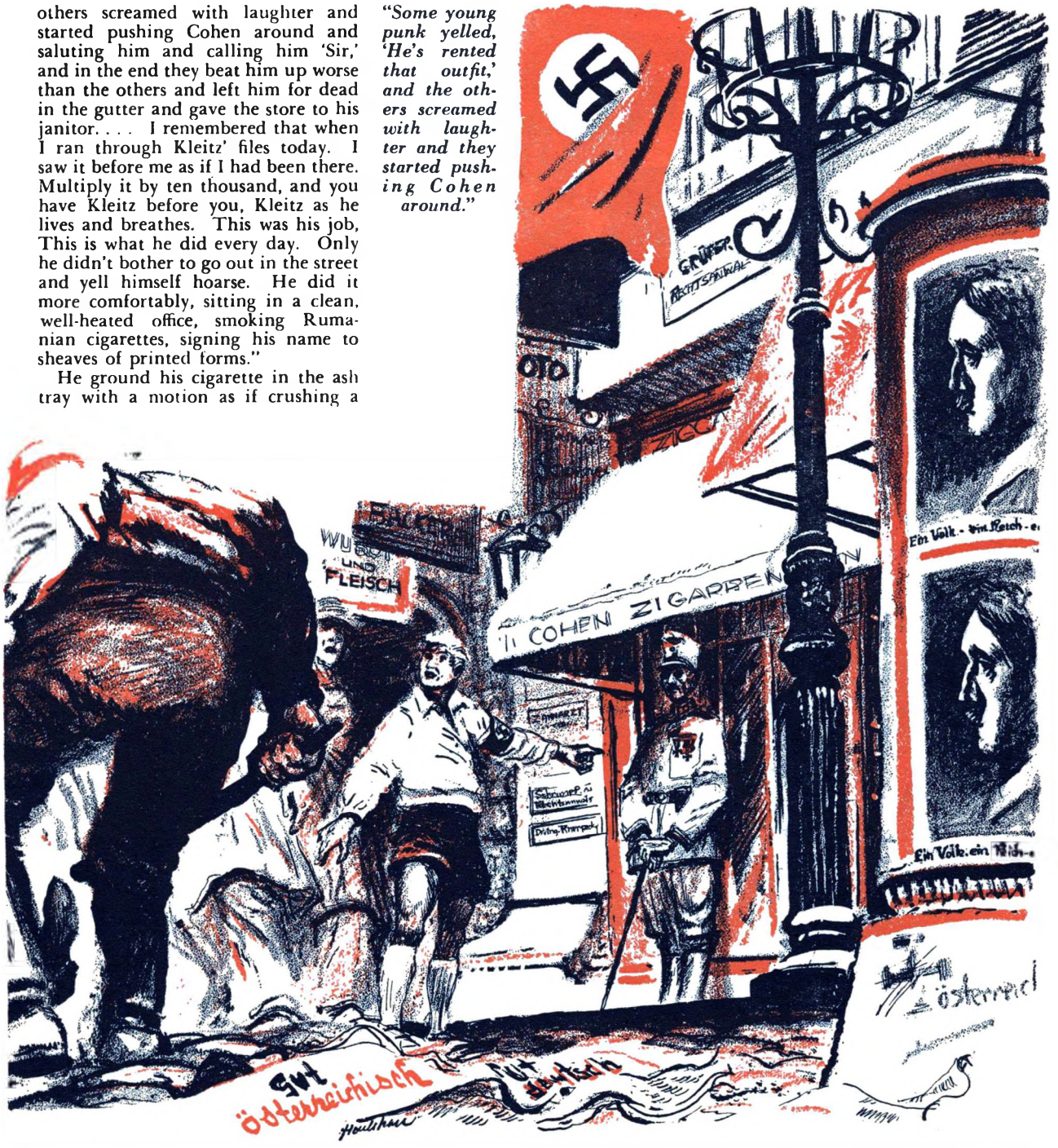
"You'll laugh at me," he said with a slow smile. "I was still thinking of that fellow Kleitz. Seems I can't get him out of my system. . . . You know, back in New York I was friendly with a Jewish family, in White Plains; they had some relative living with them —an Austrian Jew by the name of Cohen, a blind man. He was no burden around the house, though; he did his share and more, and he was always friendly. . . . Once they told me his story. It seems he had been a captain in the old Austrian army and had lost his eyesight in 1915, fighting against the Russians in Galicia, and the Austrian state had given him a cigar-store license in lieu of a pension, after the war. In 1938, when the Nazis came in, the rabble moved from store to store and pulled out the proprietors, whenever they were Jews, and beat them up and looted a little and 'awarded' the store to one of their number. When they came to Cohen's store, he stood before the door in his old officer's uniform with the gold-braid and the tall black-and-golden officer's hat, a foot-long row of medals across his chest, his eyes covered by dark glasses. He stood there and didn't say a word.

"The crowd swayed and milled around and some wanted to skip that store and move on; and then some young punk yelled, 'He's rented that outfit from a road company,' and the

others screamed with laughter and started pushing Cohen around and saluting him and calling him 'Sir,' and in the end they beat him up worse than the others and left him for dead in the gutter and gave the store to his janitor. . . . I remembered that when I ran through Kleitz' files today. I saw it before me as if I had been there. Multiply it by ten thousand, and you have Kleitz before you, Kleitz as he lives and breathes. This was his job, This is what he did every day. Only he didn't bother to go out in the street and yell himself hoarse. He did it more comfortably, sitting in a clean, well-heated office, smoking Rumanian cigarettes, signing his name to sheaves of printed forms."

He ground his cigarette in the ash tray with a motion as if crushing a

"Some young punk yelled, 'He's rented that outfit,' and the others screamed with laughter and they started pushing Cohen around."



loathsome small animal, and poured himself a third drink and emptied it. He tried to fill up the girl's glass too, but she covered it with her hand.

"No," she said. "I don't want to get drunk. You don't think much of me, as it is. I was Herr Kleitz' secretary, after all. I was what you call an accessory to the fact, wasn't I?"

"Why, you're all right," Warren muttered. The girl played with her locket and said: "I was a typist in the ministry, you see. I was nothing but a typist. When the Nazis took over, I was transferred to Kleitz' department. I had no choice. Of course, I could have quit."

"Yes. You could have quit," Warren said, but he did not pursue the subject any farther. He felt comfortable and warm now; he did not feel like having a row with her or with anybody else. He opened a new pack of cigarettes and hesitated for the fraction of a second, and then he held it out to the girl. She shook her head and looked at him with large, serious eyes.

"Thank you," she said. "I smoke very seldom. Besides, you may need them yourself, after what you gave to Dr. Schierling and to me."

"There's more where that came from," Warren muttered. In spite of himself he added, "Still, I'd like to know—"

With a terrible suddenness her lips opened in a silent scream.

"—why I took you for a ride," she said quietly. "Is it that?"

He nodded. She came over to him and stood before him, her hands hanging down at her sides, her head inclined in sadness and acceptance, looking very young and very defenseless.

"There are reasons," she said in a brittle voice. "There are very good reasons. There are always reasons when a nice girl acts like a prostitute."

"The main reason being that you don't care a damn for me," he said without bitterness.

Suddenly there was again the flicker of that small, sorrowful smile in her face.

"No," she said, "this is not one of them," and she bent down and kissed him. Her lips were soft and warm; they laid him wide open; they made him feel like gripping her tightly, like hurting her. He pulled her down, and there was only that yielding, trembling softness. She said, "No," and then again, "No," and still clung to him; and then, with a terrible suddenness, her eyes became wide and transparent like the windows of a house that is on fire inside, and her lips opened in a silent scream, and when he turned around, he saw that the door of the clothes closet had opened, and a man stood there in its frame.

The man was small and slender, and he wore a white shirt that was open at the neck, and black trousers with silver piping, and no shoes. The most remarkable thing about him, however, was his face. The left half of it was smooth and young and almost handsome; but the other half was slack and distorted, as if under the after-effect of a stroke, and the eye on that side was half-closed and bleary. And as Warren looked at that destroyed face, there came a recollection to him from afar, from below the threshold of memory, from a tightly locked chamber inside him where he kept the few things he really liked and the still fewer ones he hated: A photo, printed on glossy paper, size about four by six, the photo of an officer: his silver-trimmed cap of the S.S.-Elite Guards with the little silver death's head propped up high, his eyes slanted downward in a cold and curious smile, his features very white and large before the shadowy outlines of a Fuehrer portrait in the background. He heard his own voice as though it came from far away. It said, evenly and almost politely, "Commissar Kleitz, I presume?"

Kleitz' good eye went from him to the girl, and then it lingered on the whisky and the box of crackers on the table between them. He did not answer. He went to the drawer where the girl had busied herself before and opened it, and when he turned around he had a large Smith & Wesson in his hand. He said to the girl in German, without taking his eye from Warren, "Frisk the British swine, Pommel. Look whether he's got a gun."

"He has not," the girl answered. "And he isn't British. He is an American."

"Still a bigger swine," the man snarled. "You had no business letting him come up here, Pommel. You had no business to do this. I knew all along that you went to the billets of those British and American rats and sold yourself for a couple of cigarettes and five marks' worth of food. But at least you had the common decency to follow your trade on the outside. . . . *Du bist eine Hure, Pommel.*"

The girl's face was strained and dark. She said in a toneless voice: "So I am, Werner. And don't you ask me who made me into one. It is hard enough for one to live on those rations. It's next to impossible to make them do for two."

The man bared his teeth like an animal that is going to attack. They were very white and regular teeth, and in the back of his mind Warren thought that they looked like something borrowed in that shattered face. And suddenly the face turned toward him, and the man said hoarsely, "First we'll settle accounts with you, my fine friend. First with you, and then with that strumpet. You've seen too much, and I have no use for you any more. Go to the wall, so we won't have the mess on the carpet. Go, and don't make any fuss."

WARREN stared at the large black bore of the revolver. He tried to rise, but his legs were numb like pine logs and without power, and deep inside him he felt something like astonishment that he was scared. He hadn't been scared at Salerno, and in the burning ruins of Piemonte, and in the muddy no-man's land around Rome; but now he was scared, and he hated himself for being scared. And then he did not care any more about his fearfulness and about how to explain it to himself, he did not care about anything any more, and there was nothing left but a cold conviction of death. He heard the girl say, "Werner," and then again, "Werner!" but the man did not move. The girl said in a small voice, "I don't want you to kill this man, Werner. This man has been friendly to me. I don't want you to kill him."

"A fat lot you can do about it," Kleitz said. There was again that cold, contemptuous smile that Warren remembered, on the good half of his face, a long-lipped grimace of satisfaction. For an instant he looked exactly like the picture in the Colonel von Todt file, like half the picture. Then the girl said, still in the same small low voice: "Don't scream so, Werner. There is something I can do about it, and I've done it. I have taken the cartridges out of that gun before you came in."

Kleitz looked down at the gun in his hand, and suddenly a silent laughter came into his face. The laughter shook his whole body, it made the gun in his hand sway like a toy, and then the gun seemed to grow too heavy for him to hold; it pulled his arm down slowly and dropped to the floor, and Kleitz' knees buckled under him and he lay on the carpet, convulsed with laughter, writhing and kicking. Gradually the spasms became weaker and fewer, and then they ceased, and he lay on the carpet, very still, face down, on the carpet. The girl went over to him and lifted his arm up, and it fell back with a soft thud like a clod of earth. She turned him over. His face was still a mask of laughter, and it looked even more bizarre because the eye on the stricken side of it was half-closed, giving him the expression of a soldier who tells a dirty story in the latrine. She straightened up again and raised her left hand to her forehead as if to wipe out something, and there was a faint surprise in her eyes when she withdrew it, wet with perspiration. She said: "Dr. Marty predicted a second stroke, two months ago. He is dead."

"I noticed that much," Warren muttered. He still felt numb all over. It was like recrossing a bridge, on weary legs, a very long bridge. He pointed with his head at the door of the clothes closet and said: "You had him hidden in there?"

"Yes," the girl said. "When he had that first stroke, early in 1945, he was in no condition to make his escape north like the other big-shots, and I took him to our apartment and hid him in the little dressing-room on the other side of that closet. It has no windows and no one knows that there is a room there. . . . My father didn't like it, but he was not the man to say no when I wanted something, and I wanted this. I wanted it very much. . . .

"You must understand, when Kleitz came to our ministry in 1939 I was a typist there, almost a child, and he picked me to be his secretary, he trusted me, he made a woman out of me, he showered me with trinkets and things. They were stolen things, of course, but I didn't understand this, at the time. . . . We went to Paris and Nice and to Rome and to Capri, we bought statuettes in Pompei and perfumes in Grasse-sur-Mer . . . In Venice we got married. I thought I loved him. . . ."

Her voice trailed off. She looked down at the tips of her shoes, her eyes smoky and distant. And, as Warren regarded her, he thought that she looked like a child even now, that in some enigmatic way she had found her way back to her early days, that the man there at her feet had taken along with him the evil things he had taught her. He said, "You don't love him any more, do you?"

"I hate him," she said. It sounded as if she had spat on the floor. "I've hated him for a long time. He was not a big man any more without his big job. He was a small man, he was small and petty and nasty and boisterous and jealous. Jealous of me, who'd done what she did only to keep him going . . ." She went to the closet and took out the three cartons of cigarettes and put them on the table. Then she opened another drawer of the tallboy and ripped out the canvas lining at its bottom and took out a sheaf of papers and dropped it beside the cigarettes.

"Here," she said. "I won't need your cigarettes in jail. And these papers are the files you were looking for. There is something about Berlin in them, and also about von Todt. I don't care what happens to him."

"Thank you," Warren said mechanically, but he did not take the cigarettes and the papers. He looked down at the grinning man on the floor. His face worked. He said, "This man was trouble to you while he lived, and he's trouble still in his death. Maybe you don't know it, but it's one of the hardest things to dispose of a body."

The girl gave a brief laugh. "It is not hard for me," she said. "Dr. Marty was a friend of my father's, and he continued Kleitz' medical treatment when my father died. He's now in charge of the emergency ward at the Alser Hospital. It costs me just a phone call to have him come over with an ambulance and sign the necessary papers and take a dying man away . . ." She became serious again. She looked at Warren, her face softened by inward things that were rich and deep and unmarred. She said, almost beseechingly, "But I am talking nonsense, of course. You'll hand me over to the Provost Marshal, and I can't blame you. It is your duty . . ."

"I don't know about that," Warren said slowly. "It so happens I'd be on a sled in the morgue now, if it weren't for you." He buttoned his field coat. He said in the dryest, briefest tone: "I'm a civilian, you see. I am not a copper. It is the privilege of the civilian to see when he wants to see, and to look the other way when he doesn't. . . . And it so happens I don't want to see, this time. I think you've learned your lesson. It was a pretty hard lesson, and all I can say is don't let it happen again, and good-by."

HE took the papers from the table without paying any attention to the cigarettes, and gave her a last glance as she stood there in the middle of the room, her lips slightly parted, her eyes frighteningly large and almost black like dark pools, and then he went out and went down the stairs and to his jeep. The sky was still very bright, and the house he had just left threw a long black shadow across the street like an enormous dark tapestry. The street was empty. But to Warren it seemed as if there were a purple-clad figure standing in the dark, holding its arms out to him and smiling a smile that was gay and sad at the same time and lovely in a sorrowful sort of way. He cleared his throat and looked at the luminous dial of his wrist watch. It showed twenty past ten. There was still time to check out at his hotel and make the midnight train to Munich.

IT IS NOT CRIME, NOR CONFLICT, NOR CATASTROPHE THAT MAKES A REAL STORY, BUT A MORE VITAL ELEMENT . . . CHARACTER.

No News Is

THE editor of the San Blas *Herald* leaned forward until his scrawny chest pressed against the edge of his desk. He gave his curly gray hair a sudden shake.

"In this town, on this sheet, young fellow, we have a different conception of news," he said impressively. "The sparsity of crime doesn't trouble us."

Don Mason blinked at this heresy. "It doesn't matter if these local blokes love each other?" he asked.

Ignoring this, the old man went on: "It's not crime, nor conflict, nor catastrophe that makes a real story. It's a more vital and compelling element."

Don tilted his head politely. But now he knew John Ellender's trouble: Sweetness and light! In this flourishing Southern California town of fifty thousand the old boy could put out only a house organ—no newspaper. Names, personals, stuff lifted from exchanges, normal traffic deaths, all the substitutes for hard local news. San Blas was just too prosperous, too satisfied with life to produce news. Don Mason found himself grinning, and carefully flattened out his face.

John Ellender popped up out of his creaking chair, a withered little man, no longer mild. His eyes snapped like twin electric light bulbs.

"Character, son!" he said explosively. "Character! Revelation of the inner twists and turns of personality, the quirks and traits that make every man distinctive, and millions of men intensely interesting to their fellows! Without the aid of violent incident, a good reporter should be able to spread a living, palpitating man out on the printed page as vividly as if it were an operating table."

Right there Don might have suggested Ellender go sign up the Brontë sisters by ouija board. But Ellender didn't give him a chance.

"For example!" the editor said and leveled a finger at Don's chest. "What are you doing in this town? Why are you prowling the country, working awhile on this paper and that, wherever you can land a job? Tell me!"

Don grinned again, with rather an effort. For a moment he drummed on the desk.

"The first editor I worked for was a singularly gifted man at handling a tongue," he said. "I muffed a murder story—I really muffed it. He curled his tongue around me like a whip. He took the skin off, and the crust too. He also removed my job."

Ellender was nodding meaningly, delighted.

"I've spent seventeen months trying to prove that guy was wrong," Don said. "I grab a job in a new city when I can, and work till I get by smoothly with the city desk. Perhaps it doesn't prove I'm a newspaper man, but it does prove I'm close to it. I think that editor was mistaken."

John Ellender leaned back, relaxing. His wrinkles ran the right way on his tired face.

"I don't have to pound it in," he said. "That's a story, right there, a story without physical violence that anybody would read—you and that editor, two individuals impinging forcefully on one another. No; I won't run it; I understand this is a talk about employment, not an interview. But you, my boy, have proved my point."

He leaned forward again and turned on the eyes. His voice lowered, became confidential:

"I know five men in this town who are loaded with story. I'm going to give you one. I'm going to let you show me what you can do. Make me offer you a job; don't just ask for one. Get me a story!"

Don hit solid earth with a thump. The old routine! All that build-up, and then—"Get me a story!" How often in the last seventeen months he had had that gag worked on him!

But in his heart Don couldn't blame the desiccated little goat. There he sat, with a printing press, plenty of white paper, a staff of sorts, a deadline coming up once a day, every last ingredient of a newspaper except the essential one—news. No wonder he had worked up this character routine. Don conceded a decent, self-respecting editor should lie or steal for one reason:

So he could grab a paper fresh from the press, hang his eye fondly on the type in Column Eight and say with pride:

"Yeah, the rest of the sheet may be malarkey; but there, by Peter and the Continental Congress, is a story!"

To be able to do this would give any editor a holy feeling. How did he, a newspaper man himself, rate bawling out Ellender for attempted larceny in the line of duty?

Bad News

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

With surprise he realized that the editor wasn't looking hopefully at him. Ellender had his head on one side, as if the weight of his curly gray mop had overbalanced it. He was tasting something with his tongue and lips. "Yes, you'd be a story yourself, son," he muttered. "You'd be a story."

Don was stunned. Ellender meant it. No doubt about it! He meant it. Character alone! Maybe he really had something there. Perhaps you had to be careful about becoming too sophisticated.

"Loaded with story," Don repeated. "Let's have the dope on this customer."

HALF an hour later, with an inexorable foot, Don was forcing his aged coupé in second up the higher slopes of a mountain of the coastal range. He was still wondering about Ellender's theory. This story—no, this man—he was going out on would be a test. If the guy had character he could hang a story on, then Ellender was no con man, working an old gag.

There had been a catch. Don's prospect was a hermit.

"Why is he a hermit?" Ellender had demanded enthusiastically.

Hermits, characteristically, do not tell all—or even any. That's why they are hermits. But Ellender, all mildness gone, waved aside Don's objection. "Get it!" he said dynamically, like something on celluloid.

Probably a phony, old John Ellender. Probably his prospect would be a low-grade moron with atmosphere of sorts, but no character. . . .

This particular hermit had a talent for inaccessibility. Don dropped to low gear. The convertible bucked a dirt slope, writhing like a wounded snake. Finally it stalled. Don moved fast to block the rear wheels.

Far below him, a triangular city opening widely to the sea, San Blas lay in incredible green winter beauty. Like a wave the town splashed a little way up its mountainous-containing walls before surrendering gracefully to gravity, lemon orchards and live-oak groves. Up this high, only wild olive and buckthorn grew. Toward the summit, where this hermit reportedly did his hermiting, bare pinkish gray rock took over in littered profusion.

The sun was comfortingly warm. The air up here was newly made. Breathing was a pleasure, not a job. The bright blue sky was sociably low and austerely high at the same time. Don made a note to omit this fact from any story he might get. It didn't sound convincing.

He left the car and started on up on his own feet. He was as full of vim as a cub. It was the first time newspaper work had included mountaineering. The going was scrambling more often than climbing.

Don worked to the right along the mountain face, toward a less precipitous rise. Old Ellender had given him the line of Republic Street, San Blas' broad main stem, as a pointer; he couldn't get lost. Odd country: you picked a city street to guide you in a mile-high wilderness! He moved on sidewise to find easier going, and suddenly stopped dead.

Was this mountain crawling with hermits? Because there, on a flat slab, were two men, and neither resembled the man described by Ellender. Don slid behind a buckthorn bush. The movement caught the eyes of both men.

The taller, a deep-chested, sinister number with a forehead that overhung and dominated everything but his square jaw, frowned thunderously for an instant.

Apparently he was aware only that something had moved. He jerked his head commandingly toward Don's area. His companion, a fat fellow shirted loudly in woolen plaid, shuffled a foot sidewise in deliberate delay. He stuck out his lips rebelliously. His revolt lasted only an instant; he began sullenly to clamber in Don's direction.

DON dropped onto his chest and began to worm his way backward. There was plenty of cover on the boulder-strewn slope. He was slightly surprised at his surreptitious retreat. Was he suddenly afraid of a hard face?

"I'll be back—if things work out that way," he informed himself below his breath. A mere sop to vanity; instinct whispered that these two mugs might possibly tie in with his hermit. They were high up in his customer's bailiwick; they were the only men he had seen since he had turned off asphalt; they were definitely playing for keeps.

Don had worn his new lightweight suit to impress Ellender. But damage to the suit didn't seem important as he slithered through the clutter of rocks. Only a little to the left of the extended line of distant Republic Street he found what he had been looking for, an easier upward climb. The bulge of the mountainside protected him from observation; he made speed.

The mountain kept on going up. How high could a mile-high mountain climb?

FINALLY the rocky going culminated in a vertical outcropping of stone. He climbed the fifty-foot cliff cautiously, finding plenty of holds for hands and feet in its splits and minor ledges. At the top he paused. There was a flat expanse here a couple of hundred feet broad. Then the mountain lifted again.

Don's eyes roved among the broken remains of a narrow stratum that banded the mountain. He spotted thin blue smoke; and then, almost under it, a brown rock suddenly became a brown tent.

It was the hermit's tent, just as described. The canvas filled a gap where softer stone in the ledge had worn away.

Don peered over the cliff he had climbed. No men in sight. He moved toward the tent. His eyes were wary; hermits had been known to emphasize their love of privacy with lead. Some feet away he hailed the tent:

"Anybody home?"

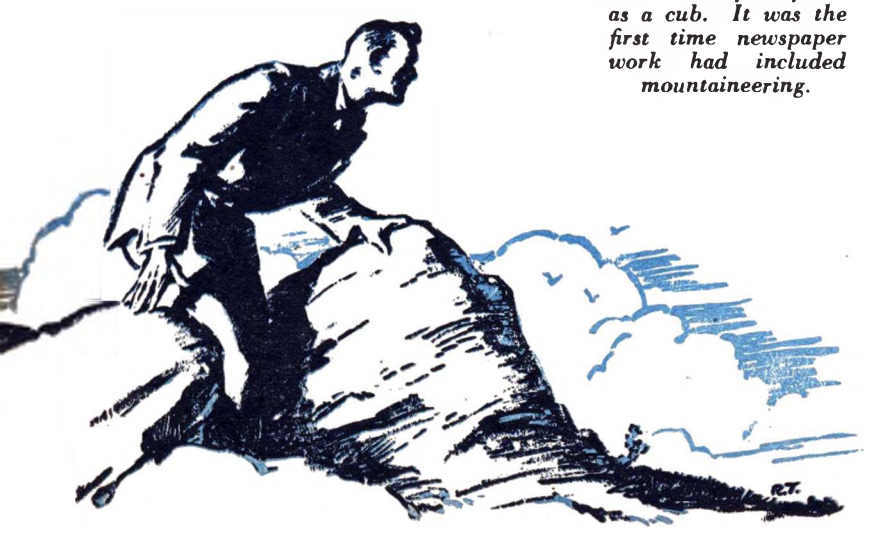
A man's head showed at the open slit. His right cheek was covered with lather. For an instant his eyes raked Don; then he waved a safety razor cordially and stepped outside. A tall, big-boned man, his shoulders were bent as if he found the world too low-ceilinged. Big feet supported him easily; brown hair hung a trifle long, and brown eyes now seemed pleasant enough. The jaw that was shaved had on it a reddish birthmark the size of a silver dollar.

"Be th'ough in a minute," he said, shaving with one hand and testing the result with his fingers. "You lost or just hiking?"

"Came up to see you," Don said easily. "Name's Don Mason."

"Sam Rowland," said the giant automatically. His eyes widened. "Me? To see me? But who knows I'm here?"

Don was as full of vim as a cub. It was the first time newspaper work had included mountaineering.



"Fellow over on Vicente Peak made out your smoke with a pair of binoculars," Don said. "Another fellow saw you packing up grub two days ago. What gives?"

"Huh? Oh—" He paused. "I like it up here."

"Going to stay awhile?"

Sam Rowland inspected his razor. "I might," he said with an air of conscious cunning.

"Feel like telling me why?"

"Don't know's I do," Rowland said uncomfortably. He waved a hand at a boulder. "Sit down. Rest your feet."

Willingly enough, Don dropped down on the rock. Sam Rowland completed his shave by rubbing the lather off on his hands and then rubbing his hands together.

"Shy on water," he said. "Dry camp. Have to pack it up."

"Been here long?"

"A month."

DON frowned. An amiable hermit of only one month's standing, with an obvious liking for company, didn't stack up too well as a possibility for a news-story.

"Needn't mention me around too much," Sam Rowland said. "And don't tell anybody my name's Rowland, will you? Say my name's—" he paused, struggling—"Jones," he said at last. "I'd take it as a favor."

"What's the idea?" Don inquired very casually.

A little irritation flickered in the brown eyes. Then they studied Don's carefully inoffensive face.

Was this mountain crawling with hermits? Because there were two men, and neither resembled the hermit described to him.

"Well, 's a matter of fact I'm keeping away from a couple of fellows," Sam Rowland said. "I haven't done anything. I just want to keep away from 'em, that's all."

"They say a city's the best place to hide."

"Not the way I figger it. I'm big, see? Six-three, and I got this strawberry mark here. So all they do is go round asking, 'You seen a tall fellow, red mark on his right jaw?' They do that, and they got me—I mean, they get to hear about me."

"That's so," Don agreed.

Sam Rowland was cheered by this tacit admission of his cleverness. He stretched long arms and legs comfortably on a patch of turf.

"Up here there's nobody they can ask," he said triumphantly. "You hungry?"

Don shook his head and leaned forward. "Ran into a couple of men farther down," he said with no emphasis. "Big fellow almost your size but heftier, with a big bulging forehead, and a shorter, fat fellow—"

Sam Rowland was scrambling to his feet. He started toward the tent. "That's them," he said over his shoulder.

"What's the matter? What are you going to do?"

"When trouble heads my way, I move."

"How do you know that they're trouble?"

Sam Rowland stopped. "The big one is Rod Cunningham," he said. He pointed inland toward a valley, but the point he indicated might have been fifty or a hundred miles away. "Him and me had a little cattle ranch —I had it first and took him in. We didn't do so well. Drought."

He said the word as if it told a long tough story and went on:

"Then a neighbor of ours got kilt right after he'd sold a bunch of stock. When they found him, he had lead in his head instead of money in his pocket. I didn't know nothing and I said so to the dep'ty, but he kept nosing 'round. Awhile after he'd quit, somebody shot at me—twice. I moved."

"But—"

"I figger it was Rod that killed that stockman. Then he got to shooting at me, thinking I knew something, which I don't."

"Didn't you tell the deputy sheriff?"

"Tell him what? Guesses? What I figgered? With Rod tryin' to kill me even when I wasn't talking?"

He shook his head. "When trouble moves in on me, I move out on it. Works swell. No bother."

"But the ranch?"

"No meat on the cattle. Land was leased. Not worth dying for."

"But—" Don Mason made vague gestures with his arm. He meant to say how about pride, anger, courage, curiosity, greed, all the motivating powers of the race? Old Ellender's prospect was certainly loaded with lack of character.

Sam Rowland sighed. "I like it up here. Too bad Rod knew I liked it up on mountains." He drew a deep, lung-filling breath. Perplexity troubled his brown eyes. "Why'd he go to all this trouble? Bunches of mountains round here. He must ha' worked hard to find me. He should ha' known when I moved, I wouldn't be talking."

He pondered.

"Who's the other one?" Don asked. "The fat one?"

"Jack Green. Worked for me, but it got so he was taking all his orders from Rod. It's Rod that's the trouble. Rod's violent. Jack Green wouldn't peep—he'd just heel along after Rod."

Remembering the fat man's balk before he followed Rod Cunningham's wave, Don Mason wondered a bit. Jack Green had seemed to have a mind of his own.

Sam Rowland was already in his tent, folding a blanket roll.

"I'll stand by you," Don said abruptly. "Don't run. Stick!"

Firmly he sat down. After all, Republic Street was right in sight, down there.

"What's the need?" Sam asked, still busy in the tent. "Rod'll get caught up with sometime without me. So will Jack Green. That happens."

His complete lack of resentment was disquieting. He regarded Rod as unbeatable as a storm or an earthquake. He was going to run.

Don Mason didn't understand this Rod Cunningham. Surely Rod must know his flabby partner was no menace. Why pursue?

Don looked around at the empty mountainside, then crowded into the tent. Sam was sad, not panicky. He was packing just enough to make a one-man load. Don watched, thinking. In the stuff Sam was discarding were a couple of odd-looking leather bags with "S. R." in tarnished silver letters on them. Don eyed the bags. Saddle-bags—sure, they must be saddlebags. His eyes remained focused on them.

Suppose Rod Cunningham had been nervous about having stolen money with the deputy nosing around? Would he invite the gas chamber when he had a simple-minded partner handy?

"These yours?" Don touched a bag with his foot.

"Since I was a kid," Sam said sadly. "Got to leave 'em."

Illustrated by Raymond Thayer

Though half prepared for treachery, Rod Cunningham was shoved backward to the cliff.

Don looked out through the tent flap and then knelt beside the bags. Sam had dumped them. Don thrust his hands into their empty bottoms, feeling and prodding the stiff leather.

"What's this lump—in here?" Don asked. He opened the bag wide and peered in. Some of the stitching was white.

"You look," Sam said without interest. "I got a load already."

Don drew out his pocket knife and cut stitches. He reached in and closed fingers around a wad of paper as soft as cloth.

"What's this?" he asked, pulling out a roll of bills.

Sam Rowland stared at it, with mouth adroop.

"It's the money!" he said. "Must be!"

To make page one for that character-fancier down in San Blas this simple Sam Rowland should turn out to be the thief and killer. But Don knew with deadening certainty that he wasn't.

"Now what?" Don asked. "You giving the money to Rod Cunningham so you don't get chased any more?"

"That's sure why he's chasing me," Sam said. "But how it got in there—" He gripped Don's arm. "He hid it there!" he said, and pride of his intellect shone in his eyes. "Rod hid it there his own self!"

"Marvelous!" said Don savagely. "So now you give his loot back to him?"

Sam shook his head forlornly. "I don't interfere. Never. It works out better that way. I'll have to mail this to the sheriff and run harder yet."

His eyes clung with increasing intensity to Don.

"You look like a smart, square young feller that knows about fingerprints and stuff," he said coaxingly. "Mail it to the sheriff for me; I'd be sure to mess it up— Where you going?"

Don Mason was ducking under the canvas back wall of the tent. There was a small space between tent and ledge. He looked back. The loud plaid shirt of the fat fellow, Jack Green, was coming slowly up over the fifty-foot cliff that edged this flat. Don waited, holding up the canvas. No sign of Cunningham.

"You better git," Sam said with surprising steadiness. "This ain't your grief."

"I'll keep the money, Sam," Don whispered rapidly. His hand was trembling. John Ellender, his theories and Republic Street seemed very far away. "If they get rough with you," he said, "I'll try scaring them off with plenty of sudden noise."

"I should ha' moved faster," Sam said miserably. "Now I'm right in it."

Don lay flat on the rocks behind the tent with the canvas lifted and watched through the front flap.

Jack Green was approaching rapidly, without stealth, almost swaggering. He was alone. Once he put a hand behind him, to touch his right hip. Probably he had a pistol in that pocket, but his hands were empty.

"I don't see Rod anywheres," Sam muttered.

Jack Green came straight toward the tent. Don Mason eased down the canvas.

"O.K., Sam," the fat man said curtly. "You and I will split. I'll handle Rod Cunningham for you myself. Okay?"

Sam sounded perplexed. "You handle Rod? What's come over you, Jack? You're different."

"Damn right," Jack said. His voice was loud. "I'm tired of taking orders, running errands. I'm my own boss. You going—"

"It's the mountain, maybe," Sam said. "That's why I like 'em. People feel different up on mountains."

"Mountains, nothing!" Jack Green said. "I just come alive today, see? I been meaning for months to talk up to Cunningham. Now, where's the money?"

"I don't interfere," Sam said stubbornly. "I'm keeping out o'—"

"You got it!" The fat man sounded confident. "I know it now. Look, do I have to coax you with a gun?"

"You can shoot me with a gun, an' I still won't interfere," Sam said shakily. "A feller's got to stand somewheres."

"I'd hate to shoot you, Sam, but you're too big to club." The fat man laughed exultantly. "Tell me where it is and I'll do all the interfering with it—an' with Rod Cunningham, too."

"I tell you—"

"He ain't far behind!" Green's voice had an anxious rasp.

"You're right," Sam said despondently. "Look on the cliff!"

Jack Green swore. Then he spoke harshly. "I've been heeling for Cunningham too long. I'll show you something. Stay here!"

His feet scuffled decisively. Don eased up the canvas.

Green was running at a shuffling trot toward the cliff.

"Boss!" he cried. "Boss! I've run him down for you! An' look what I got in my pocket!"

In the tent Sam Rowland turned. Bent-legged, he shoved a worried face down at Don.

"You get away with that money," Sam said. "Mail it. I'm not interfering—not any!"

DON stared past him, at the tall man, who had been stopped by the sound of Jack Green's voice. Jack was trotting toward him, hand fumbling in the breast pocket of his gaudy shirt. Cunningham's eyes were slitting in growing suspicion; his muscled figure straightened up.

Abruptly Green's clumsy trot became a spring.

The fat man hit Rod Cunningham's chest with his short arm outstretched, tense and thrusting. It was an incredibly sudden attack. Don's shout trailed off in his throat.

Though half prepared for treachery, Rod Cunningham's massive body was shoved backward. His tall form was knocked just beyond balance.

His arms clawed wildly. As his body doubled up at the cliff edge, one waving hand fastened like a manacle on Jack Green's fat forearm.

Not for a moment did the fat man's squat bulk halt Cunningham's backward fall. Feet scraping, Green was dragged over the edge. Tensed in struggle, they disappeared.

"Like that!" Sam Rowland chattered. "Like that!"

Don crawled through the tent and burst out, with Sam pounding at his heels. He told himself that drop wasn't quite sheer, and in places below twisted bushes were growing in crevices.

But one look was enough. Rocks. There were two dead men, still locked together, on the rocks below. Jack Green's fat fingers were clasped on his boss' throat in post mortem fury. Don had never looked on sudden annihilation with an easier mind.

"It was the mountain," Sam said, awed. "Jack was never like that on the ranch. But up here—and Rod didn't figger him fast enough. Different!"

Well, maybe, Don said to himself. This was character stuff, too. Maybe a mountain's lofty height could make a killer out of a crawler. He had the wad of money in his hands, turning it over and over.

"Poor fellows," said Sam. "Plenty of times they were right pleasant."

Don looked slant-eyed, in tense calculation, at Sam's sober face.

Sam shook his head at the money in Don's hands. "Well, I'm sure as certain in on this now. Three men dead, and I got to mail back the money." He sighed. "Dead men don't mail things. I'm in."

Don had grasped that point. Only a character hound like old Ellender, down there in his alley off Republic, would be able to believe in Sam Rowland's simplicity. A sheriff, a deputy, any cop, would scorn to swallow it. And though Don Mason could clear Sam of two violent deaths, they'd sure as shooting hang the first one on him. He'd had the money in his saddlebags, hadn't he? At best Sam was going to be interfered with, plenty. Don had seen what could happen to a simple guy who didn't make sense to an earnest cop.

His hand tightened on the roll. He wasn't on old Ellender's payroll yet.

"Maybe we won't mail the money, Sam," he said. "You be getting your gear together, all of it, and strike the tent."

JOHN ELLENDER looked up with unconquerable hope when Don Mason entered the San Blas *Herald's* office. Nor did hope quite die even when Ellender observed the childlike placidity of Sam Rowland's face.

"This is the hermit," Don said, speaking slowly. "Goes by the name of Jones. He likes it up on mountains. But he's going away now, to try another mountain. He'll like it up there, too. Do you want me to write a column about it?"

Ellender smiled wryly. But Don was still talking.

"After I'd located this hermit up on that mountain, I came on something else," he said. "I found two men dead at the foot of a cliff. The little one had his fingers on the big one's throat. There was a wad of bills the size of a San Blas navel orange in one of the big one's pockets—a revolver in another pocket. The little man had a pistol in his. Nobody's touched them yet but me. Hadn't the alert *Herald* reporter better telephone the sheriff's office about this mysterious tragedy on the mountain?"

Ellender was on his feet. Again his eyes blazed like those hundred-watt bulbs. He uttered an unintelligible sound.

Don was grinning quietly to himself while old Ellender worked the telephone, marshaling his forces for a feast after long starvation.

The unblushing old fraud! Just a frustrated newshound who had covered up his poverty with chatter about character.

HERE was a story, a real spread in any man's paper, and the thin brew of character could spill away unregarded on Ellender's floor along with yesterday's proofs. You didn't need any character when two men die in a death grapple on a mountain, with enough thick mystery around them to keep you going for a week.

Don's eyes slid away from Ellender's red face to the back of Sam Rowland, retreating thankfully through the *Herald's* door, uninterfering and uninterfered with. Don had gambled high that Sam could walk out of San Blas without facing a question. If Ellender dismissed him as a chance simpleton, the cops would follow his lead.

Don lit a cigarette, and his eyelids came down slightly. It would be interesting to know how a guy like Sam Rowland got that way in the first place. He wasn't quite as simple as he seemed. Maybe, if you got deep down into him, you'd find complexities that would make you dizzy. The inner twists and turns of personality, the quirks—

"Snap out of it!" Ellender commanded fretfully. "I thought you were a newspaper man. Beat that typewriter! You're hired!"

Illustrated by JORGE ARGERICH

"What's the matter? What the hell you busting in here for?"

The

Constable Jeff Brazier and Black Sat'dy the aborigine tracker, were halfway through their patrol when they came out of the flat gibber country, miles upon miles of loose stones that made hard going for the horses, through the steep grassless red hills into the vast lush tract that was the Wirramunna property and the domain of Chilla Patch.

"Chilla Patch don't like coppers," Dick Fetter, the sergeant, had said. "He's no crook, but he just don't like us, that's all. But you got to meet him sometime, so it may as well be on this trip. Just don't shove your neck out too far."

Wirramunna did not have the usual comfortable Australian homestead. There were half a dozen corrugated iron sheds and the largest of these was the boss' house. The policeman and the tracker rode across the yard, their pack horses trailing them, as Chilla Patch pushed open the fly-door and stepped out to meet them.

Brazier, tall, slow-moving, lean as a scrub tree, swung down while Sat'dy went on across the yard with the horses.

"I'm Jeff Brazier, the new policeman at Coolibah Creek."

"I reckoned you'd be around here sooner or later." There was no welcome in Patch's voice, but he held open the door. "Come on in."

The floor of the house was crushed ant-bed, with kangaroo skins as rugs. The furniture was rough but serviceable, built of old boxes and mulga wood. Cushions of skins relieved the hardness of the chairs, but they were still far from comfortable. There was only one room in the house; Chilla Patch had no need for privacy.

From a sack in a barrel in a corner of the room Patch took a bottle of beer.

"Where was you from, before you joined the coppers?" he asked.

"The Snowy River country," Brazier said, and felt again the lack of confidence. "Jindabyne."

"It'll take you a while to get used to the Territory." Chilla Patch was a big man, big and tough as the land in which he had lived all his life. In his heavy dark face were carved the years of struggle against flood and drought; in his sun-bleached eyes was a hint of the loneliness of the Northern Territory. "This is different country up here."

"That's what everyone's been telling me," Brazier said, and took the mug of beer that was offered him. "But I've been here five months now, and I haven't packed it up yet."

"I'm one of them who reckon you got to be here twenty years before you're used to it." Brazier knew he was sitting opposite one of the legendary ones of the Territory, a pioneer of the old school who had matched the spirit of man against a wild country and come out of it with pride and a certain dignity that never comes to the man who battles only a city. "There are some parts, like around here, where you'll never get used to it unless you was born here. Like I was."

"Down where I come from, it isn't exactly soft country," Brazier said, remembering the red stampede of bushfires and the avalanche of wild water as the flooded rivers tore down the narrow gorges and remembering, too, the tough wiry men who rode their horses at full speed down the mountains, taking on some of the glory of the eagles who soared and plunged in the high blue sky above them. "You learn there to get use to anything," he added.

"Yeah," Patch said, and you could see he had his own opinion of that.

OUTSIDER

LIFE CAN STILL BE WILD "OUT BACK" IN AUSTRALIA—AS WITNESS THIS STORY—

by JON CLEARY

He wiped the spade of his hand across his mouth.

"What you come up this way for, though? Why'd you join the coppers?" he said; and you knew the last question was the only one to which he wanted an answer.

"I wanted a look at the country." Can you explain the restless urges of any man, the call of far horizons and the unadmitted quest for adventure? "Joining the police meant a job while I was here."

"You could of got a job doing something else. You didn't have to be a copper."

"What you got against them?" Brazier said. "Fetter told me how you haven't any time for us."

Chilla Patch leaned his chair back against the wall. "That's something you don't need to know. All you got to remember is, you ain't welcome around here."

"I gathered that," Brazier said. "I wouldn't be here if this wasn't part of my patrol beat."

HE finished his beer and put his mug on the table as a horse came thundering across the yard and its rider hit the ground running, dragging open the door and standing there panting, sweat pouring down his black face, and blood running freely from the deep gash in his arm.

"What's the matter with you?" Chilla Patch, big as he was, came off his chair in a swift uncomplicated movement. "What the hell you busting in here for?"

"Hey, boss!" The aborigine stockman was trying hard to catch his breath; he swallowed deeply, then went on: "That feller Miangla killum Warrego feller! They fight about gin—"

Patch let out a magnificent curse; the room reverberated with his voice. "That blasted—"

Then abruptly he lapsed into the local aboriginal dialect, firing questions at the stockman and hardly giving him time to answer them. The room shook with the thunder of his voice and Brazier stood quietly by, waiting for the storm to die down and for the stockman to go.

Then the aborigine was gone, turning quickly on his bare heels and going, leaving behind him a dark stain on the floor where his blood had dripped unheeded. Patch stared after him till he was out of sight across the yard, then he picked up his beer and finished it an one gulp.

"What's the matter?" Brazier said. "I heard him say someone had been killed—"

"It's none of your business!" Patch snapped. "Get on your horse and get back to Coolibah."

"I think it is my business," Brazier said. "If some blackfeller's been murdered, then I want to know about it."

"Like I said, it's none of your business," Patch said. He stood with both hands on the table, leaning forward and speaking quietly now. "Get back to Coolibah, and leave this to some-

On the other side of the river from the horsemen, kangaroos loping away became a blur in the shimmering haze.

There was no time to draw his rifle; he went into the mob of blacks at a gallop.

one who knows the country. You'd only do the wrong thing."

"Tell me about it first," Brazier said. "Then we'll see if I do the wrong thing."

Patch continued to lean on the table, staring at Brazier with a hatred that seemed to put a sudden chill on the warm room. Then he relaxed suddenly and straightened up.

"Righto. If I don't tell you, you'll hear it on the bush telegraph before you're gone from here half a day. It's just my luck it had to happen while you was here."

"I'll try to arrange it better next time," Brazier said. "Now, what's all the fuss about?"

"One of my stockmen has just killed a bloke. He's only been working for me three months; his name's Miangla."

"Did you get him from one of the missions?"

"I don't use any mission fellers here," Patch said. "I get 'em straight from the tribes, and train 'em m'self. This bloke Miangla didn't settle down as well as some of the others—he kept thinking he was back with his mob, the Oonawaddas. Anyhow, last night he pinched a gin from the other tribe around here, the Warregos. The feller the woman belonged to came after them, and there was a fight. Miangla killed the Warrego. That's all."

"Where is he now?"

"Gone walkabout, of course," Patch said. "The Warregos will be after him as soon's they find out about the murder."

"What about the gin? And what happened to that stockman of yours?"

"The gin buzzed off into the bush as soon's the fight started. And my bloke got in the way of a spear. He'll be all right."

Brazier looked through the screen door at the yard, a flat glare under the blinding sun. Beneath a giant mango, almost lost in the deep shade of it, Black Sat'dy and several other aborigine stockmen were standing about the man who had been wounded. The heavy stillness and the energy-sapping heat of the day made you wonder that there could have been anything so violent as a murder within the last hour.

"Well, I reckon I better get after him," Brazier said, and tried to sound casual and assured. He had known this had to come eventually, this killing of each other by the nomad aborigines who still believed only in the law of the wild, but he had always kept the thought of it around the corner of his mind. Down in the Snowy country, it was as he'd said: you learned to get used to anything. But down there he hadn't been a policeman, had never had to bring in a murderer. "Can you lend me some horses? Mine are pretty done in."

"Why don't you go back to Coolibah?" Patch asked.

"I will," Brazier said, "when I've got this Miangla."

Patch looked at him for a moment, then angrily slapped the air. "Hah! You flaming coppers! What've white laws got to do with this? You go out and bring in Miangla, and he won't know what the hell you're doing to him, trying him your way. And whatever you do to him won't satisfy the Warregos. They ain't keen on getting their revenge through us whites. They got pride, just like we got. Maybe more."

Brazier asserted calmly:

"If I get to Miangla first, it'll stop a second murder."

"Yeah, you'll lock him up for life at Darwin or Alice or somewhere.

He'll pine away and die within twelve months. Ain't that murder?"

"You're taking it for granted that he'll be found guilty. Maybe they'll find he killed the other feller in self-defence." Brazier looked out into the yard. "I'll take that stockman of yours back with me as a witness."

"You'll ask me about that first," Patch said.

"That's where you're wrong, Brazier said quietly. "I'm not looking for any fight with you, but I'm not asking if he can go with me. I'm *telling* you."

Chilla Patch considered that for a moment, fighting an anger that threatened Brazier with violence at any moment. Then he appeared to relax. "All right; but what d'you think is going to happen if you take in Miangla, find he ain't guilty and then let him come back here? What you reckon about the Warregos? They'll wait. The abo's are the oldest race on earth, mate, and they're used to waiting. Their patience is a coupla million years old. They'll wait, all right. And Miangla knows it."

Brazier walked to the door. He looked across the yard and down the slope to the river, quivering and splintering under the intense sun, and beyond that to the broad plain where the poinciana and cassias danced a corroboree in the shimmering haze. He stood looking, not seeing anything, for a full minute while Chilla Patch stood motionless behind him. Then he turned.

"Can I have those horses?" he said.

Patch stared hard at him, biting savagely on his lower lip; then he picked up his hat from the table. "I'll come with you. But don't come around this way again! Next time tell Fetter to come himself. At least he ain't a new chum."

Brazier rode his own temper. "You haven't got to come. I'll make out all right."

"You'll be riding my horses and you'll be on my property for another two days at least." Patch opened the door and yelled for one of the stockmen. Then he turned back to Brazier. "I don't want you killed on Wirramunna. I'd have all the coppers in Kingdom Come here then."

DINGOES were already at work on Miangla's dead horse. They bolted away into the scrub as Brazier, Patch and Black Sat'dy rode up to the spot where the killing had taken place. There was no sign of the murdered blackfeller; the Warregos had already collected the body and taken it away for the ritual burial. Sat'dy scouted around and almost immediately picked up Miangla's trail.

"That feller, him gone along sea," the black-tracker said, nodding toward the north. "Bin run away quick-feller."

"Anyone following him?" Brazier still had trouble with the pidgin language and always hesitated before he used it. "Some feller go along him?"

Sat'dy shook his head and climbed back onto his horse. Brazier looked at Patch. "The Warregos haven't started after him yet. Maybe you were wrong."

"It'll be the first time in fifty-two years," Chilla Patch said. "I know these blacks better than I do white people." He spat into the dust. "Sometimes I like 'em better, too."

"They're all right," Brazier said. "You just haven't met enough white people."

"I've met all I want to," Patch said, and rode on after Black Sat'dy.

The wet season wasn't long gone and the dry had yet to come. They rode down through country where deep billabongs, patterned with water lilies, shone like silver plates beneath the high sun; where poinciana and frangipani were daubs of brilliant color on the black palette of their own shadows; and where the breeze in the late afternoon was not what you felt against your face but the dark ripple you saw, smooth as the roll of an oily sea, on the tall bullgrass.

Brazier and Patch rode in antagonistic silence, with Sat'dy, intent on the trail, riding ahead of them like a third and separate party. Miangla was traveling fast and making no effort to cover his tracks, but when his path crossed rocky ground or had been wiped out by the tracks of buffalo and other game, it took Sat'dy some time to pick it up again.

They camped that night by a river, hobbling their horses on a low bluff above a steep bank where they wouldn't be worried by crocodiles. Chilla Patch ate without speaking, then rolled himself in his blanket and turned over to sleep. Black Sat'dy was already asleep, his simple mind having no conscience or worries to keep it awake.

Brazier lay staring up at the brilliant night, only half-aware of the night noises, the cry of the *kwiluk*, the clink of hobbles, the snapping of dry brush as the heat of the day left it. He was more aware of the feeling within him, the lack of confidence and the angry resentment that had been with him, off and on, since he had arrived in the Territory. Most of the outback people had welcomed him and done their best to make him feel at home, but every now and again someone would come along, an old-timer who had never known anything else but the Territory, and there would be the sneers that never failed to remind him that he was an outsider.

But Patch's aversion to policemen, just because they were police, was something else again. Of course, there were certain identities who, in order to avoid a jail term or because they wished to go about some illegal business without hindrance, were always ready to stay out of the way of the patrolling constables.

But Patch's record was clean, and in the last twenty years, with the development of Wirramunna, he had gained the position of a respected land-owner, whose property added considerably to the wealth of the Territory. Patch's dislike of the police was deep-rooted and in a land where almost everyone had some secret of their own, his was one of the best kept.

However, Patch's opinion of policemen was not Brazier's main concern; that was something that might never be explained. There was something more immediate to be explained and proved and that was that he, Brazier, was as good as the next man. He had been here only five months and he had a lot to learn, but he knew as surely as he could see those stars up there above him that he was in the Territory to stay. He had to prove to the old-timers who sneered at him that he was no longer an outsider.

NEXT morning Sat'dy found the tracks of the Warregos, eight of them moving diagonally across Miangla's tracks but in the general direction of north. They must have traveled cross-country during the night and stolen a march on the two white men and the black tracker.

Brazier looked at Chilla Patch and broke the silence that had lasted nearly sixteen hours. "Couldn't that be some other tribe but the Warregos, scouting for food?"

"There's only two tribes around here," Patch said. "The Warregos and Miangla's tribe, the Oonawaddas. And neither of them would come up this way looking for food. Not till the Dry sets in, anyway."

Brazier knew that was another sneer at his inexperience. The old-timers could tell you, from the time of the year, where any particular tribe would be gathering food. The aborigine doesn't cultivate food but moves around living off the land, and in a country where distances are illimitable it takes an outsider a long time to be able to determine accurately where a particular tribe will be at a given time. Brazier knew he had a long way to go before he could speak with the same assurance as that with which Patch had just spoken.

"It's the Warregos, all right," Patch said. "And they ain't looking for food. They look like they're gunna beat you to him."

"That'll look just right in your book, won't it?" Brazier said. "Fifty-two years, and never wrong."

"How old are you, mate?" Patch said.

Brazier was twenty-six, but birthdays didn't matter out here. "Old enough not to skite about what I know."

Muscles bunched in the big dark face and the eyes squinted, lost in a veil of wrinkles. "You dunno a damn thing," Chilla Patch said. "If you did, you'd know enough not to talk to me like that. Here on my own land."

Black Sat'dy sat stiffly on his horse, watching the two white men staring each other down. Brazier swung his horse square onto Patch's. "I got something else to do now. But any other time, any place—"

"I'd break you in two," Chilla Patch said, and turned and rode on.

THEY rode hard all morning, following the river whose wide grassy banks, stretching away to low walls of banyan and pandanus palms, made traveling easy. Cranes creaked away in heavy flight and nuttagul geese screamed as the horsemen approached. Once or twice they saw crocodiles lying in the shallow water like old logs washed downstream from the forests, and on the other side of the river they saw kangaroos loping away, their bouncing stride and the shimmering haze making them just a blur in the distance. The sun beat down like a physical force, stinging the men's bare arms, and the horses' flanks were gullied with sweat.

Patch rode without speaking, and Brazier knew it was up to him to set the pace. Several times they halted while Sat'dy checked the tracks; Miangla was still heading north, but there was no further sign of the Warregos.

At the third halt, Brazier swallowed his pride and spoke to Patch. He was feeling the effects of the heat and the hard riding and as he stood beside his horse looking up at Patch, the latter seemed to waver like a huge dark cloud against the sky. "What you reckon about the Warregos? Have they given up or are they cutting across country to ambush him somewhere?"

Chilla Patch spat into the dirt and relaxed in his saddle. "They haven't given up, mate. Now they've started out, they'll keep going till they get him. Or you get him. That's all it is, just a race between you and them."

Brazier squinted, trying to force back the pain across his eyes. "You turning back now?"

"You're still on my property," Patch said. "Nothing's gunna happen here without me seeing it."

They rode on, still moving fast, and in mid-afternoon they came across the Warregos' tracks again. This time the tribesmen were following Miangla's path, and both the tracks were fresh and showed signs of haste. The country here was flat, but a few miles ahead it climbed into dark bony hills, good country for hiding or for an ambush.

"They were trying to get him before he got into those hills," Brazier said.

"You're learning," Patch said, and spat again into the dust. "Work that out all by yourself?"

Brazier turned his back on him and watched Sat'dy as the tracker climbed a tree. A faint breeze was coming from the hills and Sat'dy, clinging to the tree like some strange bear, faced toward the breeze. He was listening for the hum of blowflies that would tell him if there was a dead body up ahead. He remained motionless for what seemed a long time, then he looked down at Brazier and shook his head. Miangla hadn't died between here and the hills.

BRAZIER had no clear recollection of just how they came upon Miangla. He hadn't ridden as hard and as long as this since he'd been in the Territory, and when he'd arrived at the Wirramunna homestead he was already feeling the effects of the five-day ride through the gibber country. Sweat had drained all strength from him, the lower part of his body was numb from the constant rubbing of the saddle, and his head was just a knot of pain from the battering heat and the glare that splintered in sharp fragments against his eyeballs. He moved only because the horse beneath him moved, and his mind had ceased to function. Deep in pain and exhaustion, he was barely aware of Black Sat'dy and Chilla Patch, nor of the look of contempt with which the latter now and again favored him.

They were in the low rise of the hills, just beginning to climb, when Miangla suddenly broke from behind a rock and began to run. Sat'dy yelled and Brazier snapped painfully

There was no scream of pain or shout of victory; Miangla died silently.

back into full consciousness. Miangla, naked and carrying two light spears, was running diagonally up the hill, his thin legs flashing in long strides as he twisted and turned among the rocks. Brazier swung his horse, shouting to Sat'dy, and the two of them went up the hill at a gallop.

They caught Miangla much too easily. He stopped suddenly in midstride; and Brazier, following on fast, almost ran him down. The aborigine stood stock-still as Brazier jerked his horse round and rode back to him. He made no effort to struggle, and when Brazier turned and rode down the hill, Miangla trotted along willingly.

"Well, you got him," Patch said.

"Yeah," Brazier said. "No thanks to you."

"You're riding my horses. You'd've never caught him on foot or on your own horses." Patch looked down at Miangla and fired some questions at him in the dialect. The aborigine made no answer, but just stared sullenly at his feet. Patch shouted at him, then leaned forward with his hand upraised.

"I wouldn't touch him if I were you," Brazier said. "Not unless you want me take you in too."

Patch, still leaning forward, still with his hand raised, stopped and looked at Brazier. "You'd take me in?"

"Yeah," Brazier said. "He's my prisoner now. It's none of your business from now on."

Patch sat back, his dark face almost black with anger. "I'm telling you, Brazier! Don't ever come out this way again. I'll shoot you if I ever catch you on my property again. Get off Wirramunna and stay off! And that goes for Fetter and all the rest of the police and Government busybodies! Tell 'em that! Get out and stay out!"

Brazier, still feeling the aborigine clinging to his stirrup, had a clear moment of understanding. He looked at Chilla Patch and saw the man and his secret, and felt a rush of confidence within himself. "Why, you're scared of us!"

PATCH roared, in half-laughter and half-anger. "Scared! You're mad, copper. The sun's got you."

"I know why you hate us, Patch," said Brazier, and the knowledge was like a load off his shoulders. "You're scared we mean the end of your authority here. You like to think you're the king of Wirramunna. Well, you're not! The old days are over, Patch. There's law and order in the Territory now, Government and everything else that goes with the times, and it's all here to stay!"

Chilla Patch didn't answer. The Warregos' first shovel spear was already quivering in the rump of his horse. Black Sat'dy yelled and pointed up the hill, then dropped on the far side of his horse as another spear whistled close to him.

The wounded horse reared, screaming. Patch reached back, yanked out the spear, then swung the horse about and went up the hill at a rush. He was shooting as he rode, shouting defiance and abuse in a voice that matched the roar of his heavy buffalo gun.

He had almost reached the blacks when the spear got him. One moment he was riding straight and hard, looking as if nothing could stop him; the next he was wavering in the saddle, the spear flapping from his shoulder like some queer third arm. The Warregos came in like animals for the kill.

Brazier kicked his horse, knocking Miangla headlong to the ground, and went up the hill for the second time. There was no time to draw his rifle; he went into the converging mob of blacks at full gallop, feet swinging, fists clubbing, and three of the Warregos staggered back. He swung the horse almost onto its tail and drove it back at the remainder of the aborigines. The horse's chest hit a blackfeller, spinning him aside; then the two horses were going at a mad gallop down the hill, Brazier leaning across to hold Patch in the saddle. A boomerang flashed by, grazing Brazier's arm, but the Warregos were too disconcerted now for accurate throwing.

AT the bottom of the hill Brazier pulled the horses to a halt. Black Sat'dy was there to meet him, already standing by Chilla Patch's stirrup, helping the wounded man down.

"Where's Miangla?" Brazier said, and turned as Sat'dy nodded back up the hill.

Miangla was standing by a rock. He stood straight and tall, and with a sort of magnificent resignation, as the Warregos came down toward him. There was no scream of pain or shout of victory from the tableau on the hill. Miangla died silently as the spear went home, and the Warregos turned and went without a word, seeming to melt into the hillside. A cloud-shadow came suddenly from nowhere, creeping up the hill, and in the shadow the thin crumpled figure became one with the silent ageless rocks, a part of the timeless land.

Chilla Patch was standing by his horse, clinging to his saddle. The spear had wrenched free from his shoulder in the mad ride down the hill, and now the blood was running freely.

"It was the best way," he said. "Even Miangla knew that."

Brazier turned slowly and looked down at him. "You still think they were right, even after they attacked us?"

Patch gazed at him. "They'd've gone for us anyway. Or for you. You got nearly two hundred and fifty miles between here and Coolibah, and if you'd taken Miangla in, they'd have trailed you all the way. You wouldn't have slept between here and Coolibah. Not if you'd wanted to stay alive."

ONCE more Brazier looked at the dark figure lying among the rocks, then he swung down. "How's the shoulder?"

"It'll be all right when I've fixed it up." Patch lowered himself to the ground and began to tear away his shirt. "This ain't the first time."

Brazier knelt beside him. "Here, let me do that."

Patch looked at him. "You done enough already."

Brazier was too tired to argue. The pain was coming back into his head and now there was also the sickness of disappointment. He'd had his chance to prove himself as a policeman and as someone who would eventually be at home in the Territory, and all he'd succeeded in doing was having a second murder committed before his eyes and this man here beside him wounded.

"Don't let's start that again," he said.

"I ain't starting anything," said Chilla Patch. He looked suddenly tired and aged, but in the sunbleached eyes was the warmth of friendliness. "It's finished. You're all right, mate."

Brazier said nothing for a moment, then he smiled tiredly but with a sense of deep satisfaction. "You mean I'm not bad for an outsider?"

"You're all right," Patch said, and put out his hand. "And thanks."

Brazier finished dressing the shoulder, then stood up. He stood for a moment looking out across the plain. It stretched away to a sky that was softened now with drifting clouds, the last that would come before the dry season set in. The bullgrass moved softly, like the beginning of strange silent music, and the poinciana glowed with a friendly flame. Brolgas danced with stately grace and buffalo stood in silhouette against the falling sun. Brazier looked out on it all and had the feeling of belonging, that good and wonderful feeling of living in a country of which you are a part.

He took a trenching tool from his pack and turned to Black Sat'dy.

"We'll camp here tonight. Make a good bed for Boss Patch." He looked down at Chilla Patch, lying with his head propped on a blanket roll. "We'll take our time, mate. I'm going to be around here for a long while."

Then he walked up the hill to bury Miangla.

A SALESMAN HAS STRONG CONVICTIONS ABOUT THE SORT OF TRUCK NEEDED IN THE LOGGING COUNTRY, AND IN A RECKLESS MOMENT UNDERTAKES TO SHOW BOTH HIS BOSS AND THE CUSTOMER.

Horace

by STEVE McNEIL

Illustrated by
ORISON McPHERSON

HORACE came awake slowly, painfully. Some kid had been blowing up balloons inside his head; his mouth was full of rock-wool insulation. He opened his eyes and groaned. Esther came into the room, her high heels pounding on the bedroom floor. "Quit stomping your feet," he pleaded. Esther looked clean and fresh and bright-eyed. Her hair was neatly combed; her lipstick was red and precise on her mouth. Her dress was crisp, and the seams in her nylons were as straight as a draftsman's line.

She gave him That Look, and she sniffed. "It's only because I'm your wife that I'm bringing you this," she said. "It isn't because I feel sorry for you." She held out a glass.

Horace reached for it. It was very cold. He put the glass against his head.

"You're supposed to drink it."

Horace drank. There was tomato juice, pepper, Worcestershire sauce and sauerkraut juice in the glass. He shuddered and settled back against the pillow. He said: "O-o-o-h!" He smiled feebly. "Some party!"

"M-m-m-m," Esther said. "Then you remember?"

"Of course I remember," Horace said, as indignantly as he could.

"That's nice. Then I don't have to tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"Then you don't remember."

"In the main," Horace said, "everything is clear. The essentials, that is. I remember dancing the rhumba with Mrs. Edgerton. I remember doing some jitterbug dance or other with Mrs. Dickerson. I remember that—" He fell silent. Then his eyes bulged. "Holy cow!" he said softly.

"Exactly." Esther nodded.

"Then I *did* tell the boss' wife that she couldn't dance for sour apples?" Horace said weakly.

"Not only that," Esther said: "You told her that she had two left feet—that if she wasn't careful, she'd wriggle right out of her girdle."

"Oh, my!"

"She was a good sport, though. She laughed. And the boss didn't hear you. He was too busy telling the sales manager about the new logging truck they were building."

"Oh!" And Horace heaved a sigh. "That's better."

"Well, in a way, it's better. That is—if you hadn't told the boss that he had rocks in his head."

Horace opened his mouth. He closed it. He swallowed heavily and he reached for the glass of tomato juice, pepper, Worcestershire sauce and sauerkraut juice. He gulped, and then he said: "Quit needling me."

"You said that the brake drums on the new truck were too light, and that the lining wouldn't hold up, and that anybody who'd buy a truck like that ought to have his head examined."

"Well, that's right. Now, take old John Christian, over at Molalla. They've got a seven-mile downgrade, and their trucks are only getting about three round trips to a set of linings, and I bet that if the boss would let me put heavier drums and a special lining on our new truck so that Christian could apply water for cooling, I'd be able to sell John three or four trucks next week."

"That's what you did."

"I did what?"

"You bet Mr. Thorndike the assistant sales-manager's job that you could sell John Christian three new trucks by Friday of next week."

"Oh, that!" Horace laughed shortly, but without humor. "That sort of thing always happens at a party. People are always making crazy bets. You know—pushing a peanut from Main Street to Lincoln Street with your nose—wheeling the winner in a wheelbarrow up Stanton Boulevard. Thorndike will forget about it."

"Maybe Mr. Thorndike will forget, but not Charley Wendell. He won't forget."

"What has that double-crossing jerk got to do with it?"

"You don't remember drawing up the agreement—the terms of the bet—and signing it? You were very insistent upon that. You even hinted

Bets His Job

He nervously watched the road. Just as he said, "John, we'd better go up and see what's happened," he saw the truck coming.

darkly to Mr. Thorndike that you wanted no welshing. Charley Wendell signed as a witness, and he'll take good care of it, since it was stipulated that if you lose the bet, he'll be made the new assistant sales manager."

Horace put his hand up to his head. "Do we have any aspirin? I think I'm going to die. Old John Christian is the toughest buyer in the country. You can't talk around that old boy. You have to show him. And I don't have time. A week isn't long enough. A month isn't long enough. Maybe a year isn't long enough."

ESTHER pulled back the covers. "Well, you'd better get out of bed and get to work. Think of something, or think of somebody who can give you a new job. I think you're going to need it."

Horace swung his feet out of bed and stood up. He took several tentative steps toward the bathroom, placing his feet carefully, and he then realized that he would probably live. He looked in the bathroom mirror and recoiled, shocked at what he saw. He showered, shaved, scrubbed his teeth and brushed his hair. He took another look in the mirror, and it was going to be all right. He could stand it.

Esther put coffee and scrambled eggs and toast on the table in the breakfast nook. "Well, we can still eat," she said, "at least for a while."

Horace tasted the eggs and he sipped the coffee, and he took a bite of toast. He found that food wasn't going to poison him, and he ate everything, drank two cups of coffee, leaned back with a cigarette and looked at the ceiling. "I could get them to shrink a collar onto the present drums. That way, they'd be beefed up a little—just for testing purposes. But where the hell am I going to get brake lining that will hold as well soaked with water as it will dry? The United States Brake-built people were experimenting—I got a folder from them the other day; but they haven't put any on the market. If I could show John Christian a decent set of brakes, he'd grab three trucks so fast it would make your head swim."

"You can't design and build a new set of brakes in less than a week, can you?"

Horace grimaced. He shook his head. "No," he said. "It can't be done. But I can try."

LIFTING himself out of his chair, Horace went to the telephone. He dialed the number of Pete Martinson, chief of production at the Thorndike Trucking Co. When Pete answered, Horace said: "Pete—Horace Hammond. Look, Pete, when'll the new truck be ready to go?"

"We figure on finishing up on the twenty-second."

"The twenty-second!" yelped Horace. "That's ten days."

"That's right. You sales people think a guy can throw a truck to-

gether like it was a washing machine or something."

"Look, Pete," Horace said, "I'm in a spot. I got to sell three trucks to John Christian by Friday. More than that: I've got to have brakes on that truck that will stand up on a seven-mile downgrade, running as well wet as dry. It'll take a different lining and heavier drums—maybe a different alloy in the drums."

"No kidding," Pete jeered. "Sure you don't want a stewardess and maybe a portable bar built into the cab?"

"Listen, Pete, it can be done. For testing purposes, couldn't you shrink a collar on the present drums to beef them up? I think they're too light."

"Well, I think they're a little light myself. I tried to tell the boss that, but his engineers figured it. All I do is build 'em. I could shrink a collar on—sure. But it wouldn't do any good—you know that—because we haven't got any lining that will stand up soaked with water. I see what you're after. You want to run water on the brakes to cool them on that long downgrade—but that can't be done."

"Listen, Pete, I'm desperate," Horace said. "If I can get the lining, will you beef up those drums?"

"I got a job to look after too, Horace. I have to build that truck to specifications. If I go monkeying with the brakes, and Thorndike finds out about it, I'll be going down the road. I got a wife and kids, you know and—"

"But he won't find out about it until I sell the truck with the new brakes. By that time, he'll be so tickled he'll give you a bonus. Believe me, if we can sell John Christian, we're in—like Flynn."

"He never bought a Thorndike truck before, and he said he never would. He goes for Markham trucks. I don't know why. We got the same Diesel engine and nearly the same specifications. Just prejudice, I guess."

"Pete, if I get the lining," Horace persisted, "will you do it?"

Pete hesitated, and Horace's heart pounded. Finally Pete said: "Listen, Horace, if you take the responsibility. I mean, if the old man finds out about it, will you tell him you talked me into it? It might help."

"I'll tell him I put a gun at your head, if you want. I got nothing to lose."

"All right, Horace."

"But I got to have the truck ready to roll by Thursday at the latest."

Pete sighed heavily. "You'll have me in jail or something, before you get through. I could do it, but it would mean a hell of a lot of money in overtime—and you know how Thorndike feels about overtime."

"But will you do it, Pete?"

"All right, Horace—all right. Only reason I'm doing it is because it will actually make a better truck out of it, and even old Thorndike will see that, when it's finished."

"Thanks, Pete. I'll remember you in my prayers." He hung up. He sighed heavily. Now all he had to do was find that miracle brake-lining, and talk John Christian into going for a demonstration, and then talk him into buying three of them by Friday. Why was it he could never learn to keep his big mouth shut?

"Where," Esther asked, "do you get this fancy brake lining or whatever it is?"

Horace shook his head. "I don't know. People have been experimenting. There isn't any on the market, but I gotta find some."

"There isn't any," Esther said. "But you have to find some. Fine. You should have thought of that last night."

Horace winced. "Let's forget about last night."

"I'm trying to," Esther said, "but I find it rather difficult. I hope the chief of police doesn't call up; that's all I hope."

"Chief of police?" Horace said. "What's he got to do with it?"

"Well, maybe the mayor didn't phone him, but if he didn't, I'm greatly surprised. I don't imagine the mayor appreciated you and Eddie White and John Marcus serenading him with 'I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal, You,' and 'The Donkey Serenade.' He's a Republican, remember, and this is an election year."

"I think I'll send some telegrams," Horace said. "I don't think I want to hear any more about last night."

He went downtown to the telegraph office and sent five wires to five different companies engaged in the manufacturing of brake lining. He knew it was a faint hope, but this day he was not above grasping at straws. His wire to United States Brakebuilt Co. reminded them that they were experimenting, that he had seen their folder, that he hoped that they had something ready to be tested under actual working conditions, and that Thorndike Trucking Co. was vitally interested in anything they had and would be glad to help with tests. He gave his home address and requested an immediate reply. He knew he couldn't expect any reply before Monday, so he went home.

Esther was just taking a roast out of the oven. "Let's forget about it," she said. "Let's eat, and then go to a movie. Maybe by tomorrow Mr. Thorndike will see it differently—see it for what it was, a silly bet. Besides, I can't stand anything chronic. You've been fretting all day, and it's Sunday."

Horace sat down and carved the roast. He thought of Mr. Thorndike. Why, Esther was probably right. It was just a silly bet. Monday would be different. Monday would be a damp rag, washing the blackboard clean. Mr. Thorndike would say: "Let's just forget about that silly bet, Horace, if it's all right with you. Let's get to work and produce. You can't produce by being silly." Mr. Thorndike was a great believer in production.

Horace cut into his slice of the roast and chewed. It was an excellent roast. He smiled at Esther. "Now can you imagine a man like Mr. Thorndike being serious about a thing like that on Monday morning? I can't. I don't know what I was thinking. I just wasn't thinking, that's all. What show you want to see?"

Esther said she'd like the Capitol. "Gregory Peck and that girl—whatever her name is."

Horace nodded. "The Capitol it is. Let's go early and get a good night's sleep."

Monday morning Horace was out of bed at seven-thirty. He shaved, showered, dressed and put the coffee on; then he woke Esther. He looked at himself in the full-length bedroom mirror and promised himself to be more sensible in the future. Stunts such as the ones he had pulled this last week-end weren't bad, or vicious, or very much of anything except silly. "Next week-end, what do you say we drive up to Lake Quinasket, get out in the open, get a good night's sleep Saturday night and come back late Sunday? Do us good. This rat-race every week-end is just silly, that's all."

Esther climbed out of bed, put on her robe and yawned. "Tell me that on Saturday morning."

"All right," Horace said, "I will tell you on Saturday morning."

Everyone at the office had heard about it; Horace could tell that as soon as he walked in. The girl at the switchboard said: "Gee, I wish you a lot of luck, Mr. Hammond. I'd just die if that old Charley Wendell got the job."

Horace patted her slim shoulder. "Thanks, Julie, but it was just a silly week-end bet. Forget about it."

He went into his office and hung up his hat and coat. He had a drink out of the water cooler, lighted a cigarette and got to work. All the offices at Thorndike & Co. had glass for the upper half of the walls, so that by straining a bit you could see everyone who came in or went out. Horace watched the front door, and

at nine-thirty Mr. Thorndike came in. Horace was mildly disconcerted to see Charley Wendell with him. Mr. Thorndike was smiling and talking to Charley as they entered, went into the inner sanctum and closed the door.

Now, what the devil did that mean? Horace didn't like it. He didn't like it one bit. Mr. Thorndike hadn't even glanced in his direction. Charley Wendell had a feline expression, as if he were completely satisfied with the course of events. Horace went to the water cooler again, conscious that the rest of the office force were watching him. As he stood there, the door of Mr. Thorndike's office opened, and his boss said: "Horace—see you a minute?"

"In the main," Horace said, "everything is clear. The essentials, that is. I remember—" Then his eyes bulged. "Holy cow!" he said softly. "Exactly." Esther nodded.

Horace put the paper cup in the wastebasket, straightened his tie and walked into the office. Charley Wendell was seated in an easy chair by the desk, swinging his foot. "Morning, Horace," he said.

Horace said hello. He didn't want to sit down unless Mr. Thorndike said so, but at the same time he didn't want to be left standing while Charley lounged in a big leather chair as if he had a first mortgage on the firm. He compromised by leaning against the back of a chair, trying to give the impression that he knew the chair was there, all right, and he'd use it if he wanted, but that he preferred to stand.

Mr. Thorndike seated himself, picked up a paper knife and ran it through his fingers. "Horace, what's the first thing you think of when you're picking a man for an important job?"

Horace wasn't sure whether the question was rhetorical or not. He glanced at Charley, who merely looked serious and eager. "Well, there are many—"

"Judgment!" the old man shouted. "Good judgment. Give me a man with good judgment, and I will give you a producer."

"I guess that's right," Horace said uneasily. He wasn't sure where the conversation was going, but he didn't like the way it was starting.

"Now, take our little wager of Saturday night—"

Horace permitted himself a small smile. He looked down at the floor, and then back at his boss, letting him know that he knew he had been silly, that they had all been silly, but that it needn't happen again.

"Normally," Mr. Thorndike continued, "I would be inclined to forget about something like that. But the fact that you were willing to make such a bet is significant—very significant. When a man's inhibitions are reduced, characteristics normally hidden come to the surface. Right?"

Charley Wendell nodded his head. Horace pursed his lips as if he were considering the statement seriously. He inclined his head slightly but said nothing. His stomach fluttered and his hands became damp.

"The way you talked Saturday night, and the conditions of that bet, show that one of your characteristics is impulsiveness without sound judgment," Mr. Thorndike said. "First you tell me that our trucks are no good, and secondly, that you can sell three of them to John Christian by Friday." Mr. Thorndike leaned back and tossed the paper knife on the desk. "It doesn't make sense."

HORACE said nothing. He could not tell his boss that he was hoping to have the brakes changed and new lining installed, thus doing away with his own objection to the truck—that its brakes were no good. He couldn't tell the boss because of Pete Martinson, and also because the boss would call the shop and tell them to put the truck out according to original specifications. Horace felt sick. He couldn't have smiled, even if he thought a smile was indicated. He swallowed and looked serious and grim.

"So in order to drive home to you what I mean—in order to impress on you for future cogitation the meaning of judgment, sound judgment—I'm going to hold you to the original terms of that wager."

Horace nodded, and then he looked at Charley Wendell. Charley was looking at the ceiling, as if he were completely disassociated, but that he would be willing to pick up the marbles any time anyone dropped them. He was smiling slightly. And then he looked at Horace and raised one eyebrow.

Horace could have been humiliated in front of Mr. Thorndike without minding, particularly, but he'd be damned if he'd stand for it in front of Charley Wendell. He put the chair aside, and he put his two hands on the desk and leaned forward. "I certainly expect to have the bet stand as it was made. However, if I lose, it will be virtually impossible for me to continue with the organization. I hope you understand my viewpoint. Having had my judgment questioned now, it would always be subject to scrutiny. On the other hand, if I win—" He stopped and looked directly at Charley Wendell. Charley did not raise an eyebrow. The implication was clear. Horace left the sentence in mid-air, much as Charley would be left if Horace won the bet.

Mr. Thorndike blinked at Horace. He cleared his throat, and he looked at Charley Wendell, and then he said: "Well, you seem confident. I hope you know what you're doing."

Horace hoped so too. "I know what I'm doing," he said.

"Well—I'll see you Friday at five o'clock, then, Horace."

Horace nodded and left the office. Once outside the door, he found that he was trembling. *Well, that did it,* he thought. *Not only have I tossed the assistant sales manager's job out the window, but I also have tossed the job I have out with it. Well, at least I can give it a try,* he thought. *I can give it the old college try.*

He picked up a phone and gave his home telephone number to Julie, and when Esther answered, he said: "Any answers to my wires?"

"Four," Esther said. "None of them have any brake lining that you want, and don't know where you can get it."

"Oh, fine," Horace said bitterly. "Who didn't answer?"

"United States Brakebuilt. There's no wire from them."

"Okay," Horace said. "I'll see you tonight. If I get another wire, call me, will you, Esther?"

"Then Mr. Thorndike didn't tell you to forget it?"

"No," Horace said. "He didn't."

"Who cares?"

"Yeah, who cares?" Horace said. He hung up and then picked his hat off the rack and went out to the shop to check with Pete.

THAT night he hated to go home. He came up the walk, opened the door, hung up his hat and coat and glanced at the mail.

"That you, Horace?" Esther's voice came from the kitchen.

Horace didn't say, "Who were you expecting?" as he usually did. He said, "Yes," picked up the evening paper and went into the kitchen. "No wire, huh?" he asked.

Esther shook her head. "What did Mr. Thorndike say?"

"Nothing much—except that Charley Wendell was in the office, and I told Thorndike that if I didn't win the bet, I couldn't stay with the firm."

Esther sat down on the kitchen chair and looked at him for a moment, and then she stood up and put her arms around him. "Good for you!" she said. She kissed him on the mouth. "Dinner's almost ready. Go in and read your paper."

Horace took off his glasses and stared at her. "But don't you get it? I won't have a job."

"Nuts to the job!" Esther said. "You'll get another one."

Horace grinned at her and shook his head from side to side. He put his arms around his wife and kissed her.

"Sometimes," he told her, "you amaze me. You're a very remarkable woman, Mrs. Hammond."

"And you're a remarkable man, Mr. Hammond," she said. "Now get out of my way. A man around a kitchen is just about the most useless thing there is."

ON the next day, however, Horace realized that even though Esther's reaction had been fine and loyal and optimistic, the fact remained that jobs such as his weren't easy to find, and that an assistant sales managership represented ten years of hard work. You couldn't just shrug that off and laugh about it. His chances, he realized, were practically nil. The United States Brakebuilt people still hadn't answered his wire, which could be good news or bad news, depending on what was taking place at the Brakebuilt plant. Horace sifted possibilities in his mind. Maybe the idea that a brake lining would work as efficiently wet as it would dry was fantastic. Maybe the Brakebuilt people laughed and said: "That guy Hammond must be nuts." Or maybe they were finishing tests; or maybe they had the tests completed and were shipping the lining. By one o'clock he couldn't wait any longer. He grabbed his phone and put in a call to Ohio, to the Brakebuilt factory, and finally reached Vanicelli, their production chief.

"You get my wire?" Horace asked.

Vanicelli said: "Look, Hammond, we've been working on that lining. We have some manufactured, but the old man says nothing doing on it until we finish testing. I'm sorry, but that's what the man said."

Horace felt sick, and then he braced himself, took a deep breath and talked fast. "I don't care whether it's tested. I'm desperate, Vanicelli. Here's what I'll do. If you send me enough of that lining for one truck, I'll test it for you. I'll test it with State Police equipment, and with loads up to one hundred and four thousand pounds at any speed you say and in all conditions. I'll tabulate the results and send them to you, certified and notarized, if necessary. It's a break for you. I'll be using our new truck and an actual load of logs, not any of your fancy theoretical tests that never work

out the same in the field. What's the matter with that?"

Vanicelli grunted. "I don't know. Nothing's the matter with it, but the old man says no soap."

"Let me talk to him," Horace said.

"I'll talk for you," Vanicelli said. "I think your idea is okay, even though you are grinding an axe somewhere. Maybe I can swing it. I'll phone you as soon as I get a decision."

"Talk fast, Vanicelli," Horace said. "Talk awfully fast. This is bacon and beans and the payment on the house."

"I'll do what I can."

Horace hung up the phone and looked at the clock. One twenty-seven. He hadn't had any lunch, but now he didn't dare leave the office till his call came through. He sent the office boy out for a sandwich and a bottle of coffee, ate the lunch and smoked two cigarettes. He studiously refrained from looking at the office clock or at his watch, but finally he could stand it no longer. He looked at his watch, sure that it must have been three hours since he had talked to Vanicelli. Five minutes past two. Horace groaned. He tried to visualize what was taking place back in Ohio, but the thought did nothing for him.

He briefly considered calling John Christian and making preliminary arrangements for a test of the new truck, but rejected the idea. John would say: "I don't want to see your truck. I don't need no trucks." But if he showed up with a truck, and told John what it would do with new brakes and the new lining, John would watch. John couldn't resist a demonstration, solid as his defense might be against a phone call.

But he could, he realized, call the State Police and arrange to have an officer at Molalla on Friday with his testing equipment. He knew he could depend on them. They were always willing to test new braking devices. He put in the call, talked to the sergeant in charge of the district and received his promise that he'd have a man there on Friday. But it didn't make Horace feel any better; and when the phone rang, he scooped it up and said, hopefully: "Vanicelli?"

"Where's that miracle brake lining, Horace?" Pete Martinson said.

"It's coming, Pete," Horace said, "I hope. I'm waiting for a call from the Brakebuilt people. They got the lining, but there's some question about releasing it before they test it."

"Listen, don't foul me up, Horace," Pete said. "I beefed up those drums, and now if I don't get the lining and we don't make the sale to Christian, the boss is going to ask me a lot of embarrassing questions about those drums."

"I said I'd square you with Thorndike," Horace said. "Will the truck be ready to roll by Thursday?"

"I hope so."

"You hope so!" Horace shrieked. "It's got to be ready. I'll have to drive all night as it is to get to Molalla on Friday."

"Simmer down, Horace. I'm doing the best I can. We worked all night last night, ourselves, if that's any help."

"All right," Horace said. "I know you'll do your best. And thanks, Pete." Horace hung up and sighed heavily. If he got out of this jam, he reflected, he would never again open his mouth except to put food into it.

At five o'clock the girls in the office put covers on typewriters and powdered their noses. Mr. Thorndike

"Judgment!" the old man shouted. "Give me a man with good judgment, and I will give you a producer."

"Listen, Pete, I'm desperate," Horace said. "If I can get the lining, will you beef up those drums?"

came out of his office and looked curiously at Horace. "Well, Horace—working late?"

Horace nodded. "Yes sir."

"Sell any trucks?"

"Not yet."

Mr. Thorndike grunted and walked out. Horace watched him go and then went to the switchboard. "Leave my phone plugged in to an outside line, will you, Julie? I'm expecting a call."

Julie nodded, plugged in Horace's phone and left. At five-thirty Horace got up from his desk, put on his hat and coat and turned out the lights. He cursed Vanicelli, and he raged at himself for his stupidity in making the bet with Mr. Thorndike, and he wondered what Esther would say. He opened the door and started to step into the hall when the phone rang. He ran back, grabbed the receiver and said hello.

"Hammond?" It was Vanicelli's voice.

"Go ahead, give me the bad news," Horace said.

"We're shipping the lining air express. You should have it tomorrow. I had to talk like a carnival barker to get the old man to release the stuff. I'll expect a bottle of good Scotch."

"Vanicelli," Horace said, "if this thing goes over, you'll get a case of it. I'll send you a report on the tests—good or bad." He hung up the phone and settled into his chair, staring at the wall. Now he had a chance. He had a fighting chance at least—if the lining arrived in time, and if the truck was finished in time, and if the brakes performed as expected, and if John Christian were in a buying mood. He went home and said to Esther:

"I got the lining."

"Of course you got the lining," Esther said. "I knew you would."

Horace smiled at his wife. He shook his head slowly from side to side. "I wish I had the confidence in me that you have."

"You've never let me down yet, Horace. I don't suppose you ever will."

Horace winced inwardly. Losing his job, he could stand, even though he could not hope to get a better one, or even one as good. Being ridiculed at the office by Mr. Thorndike he could stand, and Charley Wendell's smirking grins could also be shrugged off; but Esther's constant faith was frightening. If she were prepared for the very sound possibility that he couldn't pull this thing off, it wouldn't be so bad. But the thought of failure, or its consequences, were unimportant to her, apparently, because of her faith in her husband. Faith, Horace reflected, was a heavy load that needed constant props. He hoped that this time the props wouldn't be kicked out from under Esther's faith.

In the morning he didn't show up at the office at all. He drove straight to the airport, but the lining hadn't come in. He sat in the airport restaurant drinking coffee and sweating out the arriving planes, and generally making such a pest of himself that one of the men said, finally: "Look, Mister, all the air express stuff goes right into that truck, see?" He pointed. "And the truck takes off immediately, if not sooner. So why don't you go some place and relax before you drive us all nuts."

Horace said, "Sure," finally left the airport at four o'clock and went to the plant. He peered and fussed around the new truck, and he looked suspiciously at the new drums and the air lines until Pete finally said: "Get out of here, Horace! Go home and sit down. Go play golf. Go do something, but quit heckling us."

Horace left the plant and went home. Esther drove him out of the house at seven, maintaining that he would wear a path in the rug, and he went, in desperation, to a movie, and when he got home Esther was in bed and asleep. Horace called the airport, but the lining hadn't come. Worn out with anxiety, he went to bed—and in ten minutes was asleep.

He didn't come awake until eight-thirty on Thursday morning, grabbed a phone and called the plant.

"The lining got here half an hour ago," Pete said. "Now I don't want to hear from you again. The truck will be ready to go by four-thirty this

afternoon. You want to take a driver with you?"

Horace let his breath out in a great rush. He said: "No. I'll drive it myself. Thanks, Pete."

AT four-thirty Horace walked into the plant and looked at the truck. It looked solid and beautiful in its new coat of yellow paint with the trailer loaded on the log bunks. He patted it fondly and said to Pete: "What do you think?"

"I don't know." Pete said. "It's the best truck we ever built, but I don't know what your brakes will do when they're soaked with water. We tested them as they are. They work fine, but I don't know." He looked at his watch and said: "You'll have to drive all night to get to Molalla in the morning."

Horace nodded. "I know. I better get going. If the boss wants to know where the truck is—tell him." He climbed into the truck and pressed the starter. . .

At nine o'clock the next morning, Horace drove into the truck lot at Molalla and climbed stiffly down from the cab. His joints ached; his eyes burned; and his arms were heavy from the long, all-night drive. He walked stiffly over to the office, seeing as he walked, the State Police panel truck containing the testing equipment. John Christian was standing by a big pot-bellied oil stove, smoking an evil-looking pipe. He squinted at Horace and said: "What you cooking, Hammond?"

"I got a truck outside, John," Horace said. "I had the State Police come out with some testing equipment to show you what the truck will do. When I get through, you're going to buy about three of them."

John Christian smiled at Horace. "I got a truck. I got twenty-seven trucks."

"And have you got even one truck that will take that long seven-mile downgrade without burning up a set of brake lining in three or four round trips?"

"No," John said, "and neither have you."

"First," Horace said, "I'm going to run braking tests without a load. Then I'm going to run them with truck and trailer and load grossing one hundred and four thousand pounds. Then I'm going to run the tests with the brakes soaked with water, and then I'm going to haul a load down that seven-mile grade for you, and you can calibrate the wear on the lining. Fair enough?"

John looked at Horace and squinted one eye. "You're nuts. I don't care about your tests. I know your brakes will stop the empty truck. But I would like to see you bring a load down that seven-mile grade with water running on the brakes. And I would like to measure the lining afterward."

Horace swallowed. He said: "All right."

"But I'm not going to have my driver come down that grade with a set of brakes that we don't know anything about."

"I'll drive it," the driver said. "This looks like a good truck. Anyway, if she starts running away, I'll leave it. I don't own it."

Horace winced. He had a mental picture of the new Thorndike truck at the bottom of one of those canons if the driver jumped off. He gulped and he said: "Sure, that's all right. But you don't have to worry."

"I sure don't," the driver said, "but you do."

Horace nodded. He felt that the driver had made a sound observation. "We got a tank rigged up to run water on the drums for cooling. I'll show you how it operates while they measure the lining."

The driver nodded and rolled the truck over to the shop. They measured the thickness of the lining, and then Horace watched the new Thorndike truck roll on up the grade to be loaded. He hoped, as he watched it disappear around a bend, that he would see it again with its eighteen tires sitting safely on the highway instead of pointed to the sky at the bottom of a canon.

While they waited, Horace tried to talk specifications and horsepower ratings with John, but his heart wasn't in it. He smoked cigarettes and looked at his watch and nervously watched the road. He fully expected to see the driver walking down the road and then telling him that the brakes had failed, that the new truck was upside down at the bottom of a ravine. And just as he said, "John, we'd better go up and see what's happened," he saw the truck coming.

The driver grinned at them as he stopped. He stuck his head out of the cab and yelled: "These brakes are sweet as honey. I had them load me down. I bet this truck and trailer and load weigh close to one hundred and six thousand."

John Christian nodded. He puffed his pipe and squinted. "We measure the lining," he said. "Go dump the load."

WHEN the driver came back after dumping his load of logs, Horace stood outside with his legs trembling and his heart thumping while they measured the lining. He was afraid to go inside and watch. He was afraid that the lining had worn down to the rivets, but he couldn't watch. He smoked cigarettes and paced. Presently he heard the door open and watched John Christian walk toward him. "That lining didn't hardly show enough wear to be measured, Horace," he said. "Just put a glaze on it, that's all. Just wore off the roughness." He put his pipe in his mouth and puffed twice and then took it out.

Horace let his breath out in a great rush. He grinned at John. "How about buying three of them, John? It's a great truck."

John Christian shook his head, and Horace's spirits draped themselves around the gravel in the truck lot. "No, I don't buy three of them," John said. "I buy five of them. You leave that truck here and send me four more. Come out some time and write up the contracts."

It was almost too much. Horace felt his knees turning to jelly. He smiled at John and said, "Thanks, John. I think I'll go inside and use the telephone."

John nodded. "You better sit down. You look a little pale."

Inside the office Horace picked up the phone and asked for long distance. When the operator answered, he said: "I want to place a call to Mrs. Horace Hammond at Burnside 4627. . . . That's right. . . . This is Horace Hammond, assistant sales manager of Thorndike Trucking Co."

Mainly Masculine

PROFOUND DECISIONS. **Champaign, Ill.: It is justifiable arson when a man is stung by a wasp while he is in his outhouse and gets so mad he sets fire to the place. Savannah: It is illegal for fishermen to dig for worms in the cemetery. Chicago: It is legal for a man to wrestle with a bear on top of a roof.**

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CONSOLATION PRIZE. **Eduardo Fiestas, Olympic hurdle performer from Peru, carried back home with him a hurdle strapped to his luggage. It was the one he had kicked over in the London meet.**

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SOLUTION. **For a long time there had been considerable puzzlement in China by reports of Liu Po-cheng, the one-eyed Communist general, being seen on successive days in widely separated portions of the war front. From out of Nanking the explanation was finally divulged: Liu uses eight doubles—each with an eye missing.**

—by Bruce Hancock

KELLY

ONE OF THE NINE MEN WHO AT THIS WRITING HAVE RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR IN THE KOREAN WAR WAS AN AMERICAN INDIAN. KELLY WAS ANOTHER—SO NICKNAMED BY A BUDDY WHO THOUGHT ONLY AN IRISHMAN COULD FIGHT SO WELL.

by CASPER BLACKBURN

ITALIAN marble pillars stood at both sides of the entrance to the room where I sat. Glass chandeliers against which rays of light danced, hung down from its high ceilings. Once this former ducal palace must have been filled with soft Italian music as dark Naples belles glided over its beautifully designed, colored floor tiles. Now the only sound was the continual scuff of G.I. boots.

This was the briefing room for the American-Canadian First Special Service Unit to which I was attached as war correspondent. The only furniture inside it was folding chairs, a table on a raised platform in the front of the room and four flanking unupholstered arm chairs. An empty bulletin board, lit by modern lights, stood behind the platform. Three long black scars where blackout curtains hid the one-time picture windows were grim reminders that the enemy would like to know what went on inside.

The man seated beside me was a Navajo Indian. I met him soon after I'd reported to Major Radford, commander of this super-commando unit. The Major had called the lithe, dark youngster to him.

"This is Kelly," he said, smiling, "our Navajo Indian first sergeant. Stick close to him, and you'll get a story worth writing. Take care of him, Kelly," he went on. "He's to stay with you."

Kelly smiled only briefly. He said nothing at all after his first greeting, even though Major Radford left us alone. I had the feeling that he was assessing me, not critically, but to get an answer to questions of importance.

We went together into the briefing room. As the scuffle of shoes continued, I became interested in those who entered. They numbered about three dozen. All were young; all were big. Kelly was a midget compared to most of them. Yet their size impressed me less than an indefinable feeling of their controlled power, which made me know that I was a fifth wheel, attached to an efficient machine, one that not only was of no use, but that might interfere with that machine's operation. And Top Sergeant Kelly, Indian, was a chief cog in this machine.

The entrance door to the briefing room slammed shut and was locked. An excited buzz grew, little by little as the three base officers and Major Radford took seats by the platform. It died as suddenly as if someone had turned a switch to cut it off when a GHQ colonel rose and went to the platform.

"You may smoke," was all he said before he turned to the bulletin board.

I offered Kelly a cigarette. He shook his head. "Too hard on smell," he said. I knew better then why he had top-sergeant stripes; he had let nothing interfere with what might be ahead in action.

I HAD no time to linger long over this thought. The Colonel was again facing us. A map was now on the bulletin board. The Colonel's hand held a pointer. He half-turned toward the board.

"These are the Saint Hyeres Islands, off southern France. The largest, this Isle of Levant"—he pointed to it on the map—"will be your goal. Your ship the *Henry Gibbons* is now in Ajaccio, Corsica. You'll receive flight orders here. Number One priority. Go to the airport singly or in pairs; the enemy may know your unit. On reaching Ajaccio, go directly to the ship. You sail after dark tomorrow. Intelligence will tell you what we know about Levant; our tactical officer will give you your mission, and Major Radford your personal instructions. You may ask questions, but may not get an answer."

When I finally raised my

"A battery of four big guns on these bluffs," the intelligence officer said, pointing, "with range enough to blast all beaches, and power to sink our biggest ships, commands our landing area. Machine-gun emplacements surround them. The primary duty of the more than 125 men on Levant is to man and protect these guns. They also guard the single good beach there, but not all the Levant coves a small boat can get into. The island is heavily trenched.

head, Kelly was no longer in front of me. He'd slithered away, lizardlike, to the Nazi outpost.

Most of them are dummies, but all are well covered against air mapping. All may have warning signals to German headquarters on the bluffs. Our agents think not, but aren't sure. They know one trench leads from this beach"—again the pointer came into play—"into the cement-lined dugout on the bluffs used as magazine and quarters. Questions?"

A private, the biggest man I'd seen in this outfit of giants, arose.

"Could you point out at which cove we'll land and the best way to reach this main trench?"

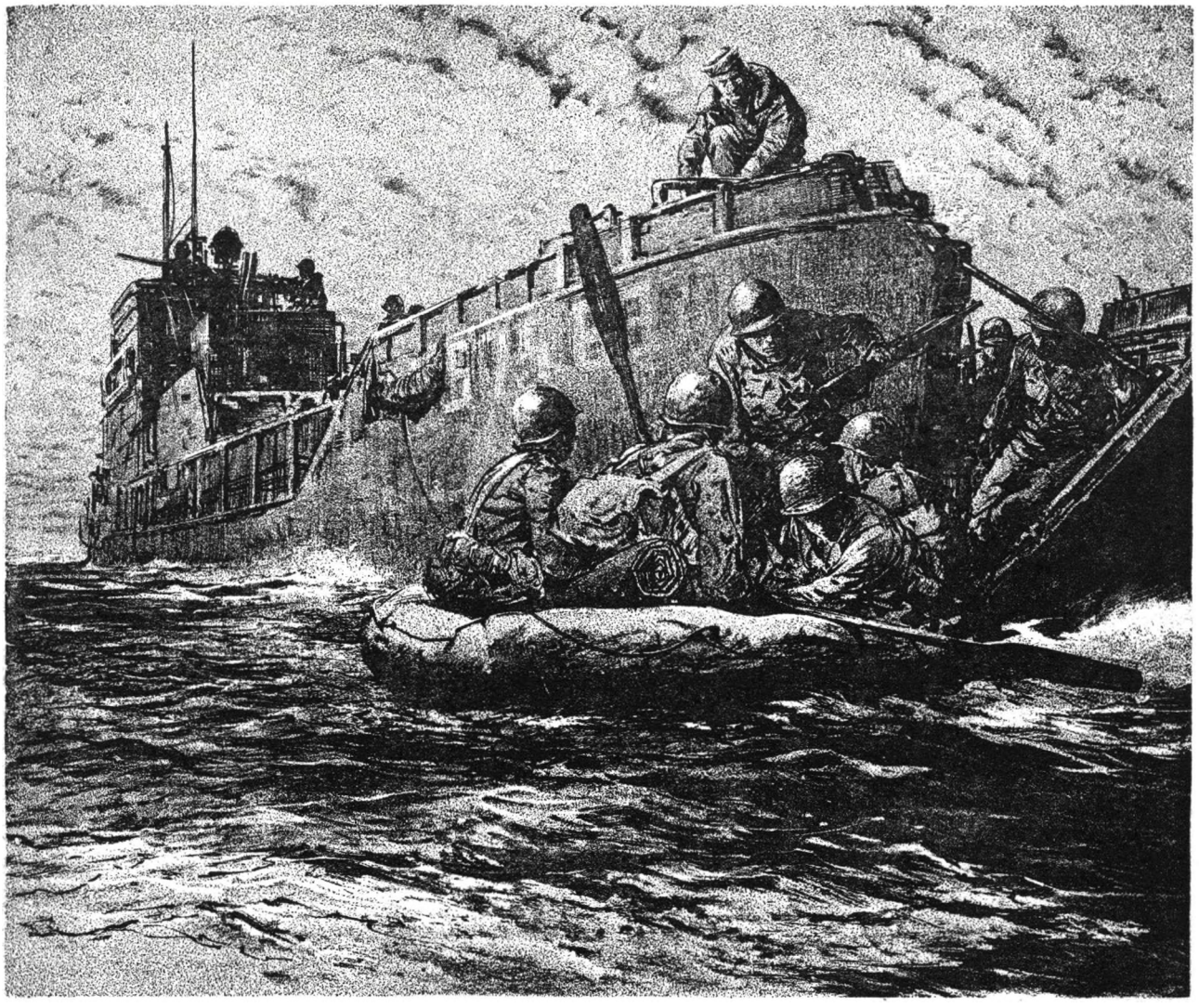
I noticed an embarrassed half-grin on Major Radford's face. I glanced at Kelly. His lips were set, angry. I sensed that neither liked the question—a natural one, I thought.

"I couldn't and I wouldn't," the intelligence officer replied crisply. "I don't know myself. If I did, I wouldn't tell you. You'll get a signal where to land. The men who give it will pass on all the dope they have after you're ashore."

No other questions were asked. The tactical officer went to the platform.

"Much I say will be old stuff to experienced men," he began, "but it has to be said. I will outline only the main angles of your job. The big jobs must be silenced before H-Hour, the machine guns knocked out. No word by signal or by escaping troops should be permitted to reach the mainland. Use guns only as a last resort, but fulfill these missions. If you save your boats, ride ashore after the beachhead is secure. If not, swim."

He sat down and waited for questions. None came. I know my knees



We were under way toward Levant. Suddenly it seemed to me that the darkness had changed sides. It

were shaking about what this group was assigned to do. I felt Major Radford, the next speaker, was also unhappy, but not from the personal fear which was my malady.

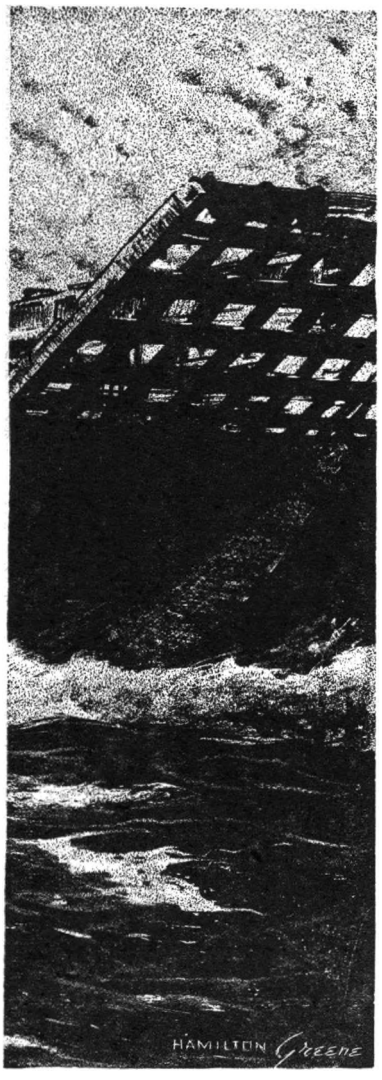
"You've heard what's ahead," he said slowly. "It's not going to be easy. Not all of us will see it through. But that's war. You're all picked men, all volunteers. This outfit didn't count the cost in Kiska or in Italy. It won't this time. I have your flight orders. Each has a time of departure. Leave the airport as near that time as possible. Here are passes signed by me. The Ajaccio MPs will let only those with these passes into the yard and onto the *Henry Gibbons*. I'll give the officers theirs in the corridor. First Sergeant Kelly will pass them out here to you men. I'll see you aboard. Get there early if you can. After the ship sails, we may have a long wait for our next sleep."

As soon as Kelly reached the platform, Major Radford and the other officers left the room, closing the door behind them. I went with the others toward the table where Kelly stood. As they neared it, the soldiers formed in line, without an order. I joined it too. But not the big private who'd asked the single question. He went directly to the table and stood there, his big figure dwarfing Kelly. His hands were on his hips, and a broad self-satisfied smile was on his face.

KELLY apparently didn't see him. But I could feel a sudden electric tension in the room, which affected every man there. No one left the room after receiving passes and orders. All went to the back of the room and waited.

After all men in line had left the table, Kelly still stood there. His eyes remained steadily on the single paper and the lone card he held. He turned these over and over, without nervousness, but as if he were memorizing what each said.

Suddenly he raised his eyes. His glance went over, almost through the big man, and came to rest on those of us in the rear. "I have here," he said, almost indifferently, "orders and a pass for one PFC Mommsen. You all know him; he's a big man, 260 pounds of bone and muscle. But he's also a spy or a fool. Only one or the other would have asked the exact spot for a landing. . . . He isn't a spy. He must be a fool. Fools cost lives." The indifference was now gone from Kelly's voice. "Especially undisciplined ones. Those who won't line up with their outfit, without



was now malevolent, treacherous.

orders. With one flip of my wrist I can destroy Mommsen's passport to Ajaccio and to the ship. Shall I tear these in two?"

He held aloft Mommsen's orders and pass. No one answered, but I could hear the indrawn breath that seemed to be common to us all.

I looked at Mommsen. The smile was not now on his face. His ham-like hands were doubled into fists, his face boiling with anger. But he stayed as still as we.

Kelly's voice broke the uncomfortable silence. "I'm not going to," he said. "We will have forty men at best to meet 125 Germans on Levant. We'll need every one. Here!" For the first time he turned to Mommsen, "Take these and get out—before I change my mind."

Mommsen took both and walked out of a silent room, his face flushed a turkey red. I wondered if Kelly had been wise to bait him so openly. But when the Indian came down to me, he seemed to have forgotten the incident entirely.

His voice was normal when he said: "We'd better move on out to the airport. We're the first to go, after the officers."

As we flew out across Naples harbor, the sight of the armada anchored in that badly battered harbor was gripping and full of beauty. The three-cornered masts of battleships vied with the sleek lines of destroyers and the various other ships needed to carry out an invasion. I could not help thinking again of that scene in the briefing room. The welfare of many ships in the harbor, and of the troops aboard, might depend on the success of the mission assigned the First Special Service Unit, and that an angry Mommsen might spoil this hope.

I said as much to Kelly. He brushed me off with "Don't worry about Mommsen. He just had to be cut back to fit his breeches."

I had a hunch from Kelly's frown that he wasn't entirely at ease. He'd been talking to me before about some of the earlier jobs of his outfit, and about the good men they'd lost. He said no further word as we continued our flight. By the time we came in over the Corsican mountains and circled to land at Ajaccio, he was in a deep brown study.

He came out of it at the order: "Hook belts for landing." As soon as the wheels touched the ground and the plane straightened out on its run into the airport, he picked up my gear and handed it to me. Then he got his own. We were among the first to step out.

Kelly was in a hurry. He hustled me along until we sighted an MP sergeant. We each showed our passes.

"Okay," the MP said. "A jeep will be here soon. You can ride it to the Navy yard."

Kelly was plainly unhappy about the delay. He paced back and forth impatiently until the jeep arrived. And all the way in, he seemed to be pushing the jeep as if he'd have it go faster over the pockmarked road which made us bounce up and down like marionettes as we hit its gaping holes. I had a hunch Mommsen caused Kelly to be in his rush.

This feeling increased when Kelly barely waited until we'd put our gear in the quarters assigned before he said, shortly, "Want to see the major a minute," and took the ladder to the officers' country.

Many of his unit had come aboard ship before he returned. One of the old-timers told me that Casey, a big Irish sergeant, killed at Anzio, had named Kelly, after Kiska, when he announced to the unit: "Don't let this broth of a boy's skin fool you. He's all Irish. He has to be. With the guts he has. From now on he's Kelly to me."

The name took hold. Kelly liked it. His real name was used now only on the payroll. This same old-timer told me more about Mommsen and Kelly. They'd been at odds ever since Mommsen reported. Mommsen hadn't liked the idea of an Indian top-kick. He'd said so.

"He's a stubborn Dutchman," my informant told me, "but will be a hell of a good man—almost as good as Kelly—once he knows the ropes. Us old men in this outfit never thought Kelly'd tear Mommsen's card up. Kelly's first interest is the job ahead. Smokes like a chimney between jobs. Won't light up when a new one's near. The new men don't know Kelly. A few have soured on him. The Major and Kelly will have to pull some wild cards from the deck if we go ashore on Levant united."

Kelly's frown was gone when he came back to quarters. It didn't return at the greeting six of the unit gave Mommsen when he arrived. Kelly couldn't help seeing them flock

"He's either a spy or a fool!"

Illustrated by Hamilton Greene

"Two Nazis were watching the sea with night glasses. They aren't now!"

to his side. But he went on collecting both the ugly double-edged knives and the straight ones each man carried. When Kelly dealt them out again, they were razor-sharp, deadly.

By 20:00 all the unit were aboard. Major Radford came to quarters a few minutes later. "Time to turn in," he said. "No reveille tomorrow. But the galley'll have eggs, toast and coffee for you when you turn out. Get some shut-eye."

He turned to go, then motioned to me. "I'd like to see you a minute or two. Won't keep you long."

We went in silence to his quarters. "I assigned you to Kelly," he told me then, "when I thought I'd keep him with my main body. I'm not doing that now. I'll reassign you."

"You said I'd get a good story if I went with Kelly," I reminded him. "Wouldn't I, wherever you put him?"

"Perhaps too good," he said slowly. "It may be mighty rough. You want to go with him just the same?"

I nodded. "Unless I'll be in the way."

The Major walked across the cabin, lit a cigarette and puffed on it a few minutes before he answered. "You won't," he said, "not with Kelly. He'll not allow it. Yet you're our first correspondent. I want our story written. Hell, I'll take a chance if you will. I'll tell Kelly."

That short talk didn't help me get to sleep, but I did drift off—and stayed in my sack almost as long as anyone in the unit. The crew and officers of the *Gibbons* were far busier than we during the daylight hours. But we weren't idle.

The Major ordered us to cut our gear to the bare necessities, a blanket-roll, weapons and rations for each man, for me the same, without weapons. The extra gear went into bundles to be turned over to the beachmaster at Saint Maxime to be picked up later. More than one man had tears in his eyes as he laid aside a picture of sweetheart or wife, too large to be carried. Mommsen did. But Kelly placed a picture of a boy about three on his pile without sign of any emotion.

WITH nightfall, the *Henry Gibbons* weighed anchor and headed out. Darkness enveloped the lightless ship. The sky was empty of stars. The ship's engines throbbed steadily, carrying us ever closer to Levant.

The gang I was with didn't trust the sea. One told his whole outfit's thoughts: "We're like sitting ducks here. No chance to fight back. A mine, a sub, a plane or a shore gun can blow us to hell in a second. I'll be glad when we're ashore where it's safe."

Yet the ship was well protected. Destroyers must have surged forward, abreast and fore and aft of the *Gibbons*, their delicate listening devices searching avidly for hidden submarines. Radarmen watched screens for pips of aircraft in the sky. Sweepers were already ridding of mines the channel where we'd land. Our ship's gunners stood at their posts ready for

action. And the god of the dark rode on our side.

As the ship plunged ahead, the unit went to quarters to pay tribute to this dusky god. Kelly sat there, around him all the tools of the trained make-up man. Under the watchful eyes of the unit's officers, each man went to Kelly to have his face darkened. I was almost the last in line. Mommsen stood just ahead of me. Kelly's hands did not waver as they worked on Mommsen's face.

As the big man stepped away from the table, he caught sight of his face in a bulkhead mirror. "I look just like an Indian," he whispered, in a voice I'm sure he thought only Kelly could hear. "That should be enough in itself to make me a hero."

For a second Kelly's iron composure vanished. I saw hurt eyes and lips compressed in pain. He was himself again in an instant. He did my face competently and quickly. I was glad he didn't know I'd heard.

When Kelly had finished, Major Radford closed the door to the unit's quarters. "We'll be landing soon," he said. "The Navy will take us close offshore. When we get our landing signal, we'll go in in our collapsible boats, seven men to a boat. The main body will go up the bluffs, knock out the guns and personnel there. These men"—he called a list of six, including Kelly and Mommsen—"will silence the beach machine guns and prevent all signals to shore. They'll fire only in an emergency. Kelly will be in charge; Mommsen, now promoted to corporal, second. Wait at the beach till we come. Get on deck now and into boat Number One."

The selected group contained only one old-timer, Betts. The others had all welcomed Mommsen aboard. Everyone picked up his gear silently. No one spoke. Mommsen wore a frown, quite plainly puzzled that he'd been promoted. But Kelly was at ease as he took my arm and piloted me toward the deck.

I thought of the "wild card" I'd heard about earlier. Kelly seemed sure he had a pat hand. I wasn't sure the Major agreed wholly. Still, Kelly must have convinced him that this was the right play in the important game ahead. I couldn't imagine the Major risking his mission to end a personal feud. He'd been serious in saying Kelly wouldn't let me be in the way. I couldn't see the hole card in this set-up, but it must be there.

As I'd been thinking about this, the LCT had been lowered into the water. We were underway toward Levant. It suddenly seemed to me that the darkness had changed sides. It was now malevolent, treacherous.

The Germans could lurk behind it until we neared shore. A minute of glaring light from the enemy searchlights, the flare of the big guns, and the cockleshells we rode would be scattered like chaff on the surface of the Mediterranean.

The lights did not come. We still moved shoreward, as silently as the death we dared. Suddenly, from the shadows ahead, a steady red light gleamed toward us over the water. I drew an unsteady breath until I heard the whispered order: "Inflate boats." Then I knew. That light was our landing signal. Within a few minutes we'd be ashore—on an unknown island, with far more enemies than friends. The little LCT we'd soon leave now seemed a haven.

Paddles dipped in the dark sea. The red light remained steady. It guided us into a wooded cove. We clambered up a six-foot bank, carrying our boat. The men in the others joined us. We deflated our boats and hid them. A row of pickets vanished into the gloom. Major Radford talked for some minutes with the man who'd held the light, then called a conference of officers and non-coms. Kelly took me with him.

"On the bluff," the Major said, "the men, except the gun crews, are conscripts, mostly Balts. The beach force are hard-boiled Nazis, able fighters. Kelly,"—he spoke to my guide—"add these six men to your detachment." The names he read included Hellen and Gallagher, veterans; the others I didn't know.

"Not far from the water's edge at the beach are two searchlights, with signal shutters," the Major went on, "well protected by uncharged barbed wire. No aircraft. No tanks. Three Kraut machine-gun revetments are cement-embedded, but not turrets. The terrain behind is mostly open, but has a few trees and fairly high grass. One mile over a compass course of 270 degrees should get you in behind the enemy. You'll cross one dummy trench and the main one. They may be wired or have land mines. Explode one, and you'll have a tough fight. But the job's the same. And must be done. Fire whenever you must, not before. Take one machine gun. Call your men, give your own orders and get going!"

Kelly got us together. "We'll move in two columns, within arm's-reach. Mommsen will lead one, I the other. We two will test the ground ahead with each step. Keep the man ahead of you always in sight. If he stops, come up and touch him. At the trenches, Mommsen and I'll check as best we can for wiring. Then send one man at a time across, keeping all others clear, in case of land mines, going last ourselves."

"I'll lead mine," Mommsen broke in. "I'm not afraid—"

"You'll do as Kelly says." The voice was Major Radford's. "He's in charge."

No one answered. For a minute the silence hung over us, menacingly. Major Radford could not recall Mommsen's words. When we set out, shortly after they'd been said, their impact was still with us. Was our Indian first sergeant too careful of his own skin? I'm sure Kelly must have known that more than one of his twelve was asking that question.

Yet he stepped out with certainty. His pace was fast in spite of the variety of weapons which dangled from his belt. He moved with the stillness of light over this unknown terrain; I couldn't catch the least sound of his steps. Occasionally, only, a muffled sound, a slight crackle could be heard on my left. I had the unpleasant feeling that my own feet must be pounding out, in the unmistakable rhythm of the African tribesman's drum, the news that we were coming.

Suddenly Kelly stopped. I came up behind him and patted him with my hand, at almost the same instant that I felt a light touch from the man to my rear. Kelly went down on hands and knees. His hands, almost his whole body, disappeared from sight beneath branches just ahead of him. When he rose to his feet, he whispered to the man behind me in column: "Hellen, I want to check the trench farther down for wiring. You and Gallagher lower me."

"No wiring," he reported in a low tone, when brought up. "The trench is about seven feet deep. Cross first, Hellen—on hands and knees to distribute your weight and make less likely the setting off of any land mine. Luck, lad."

The last two words had an undertone of emotion which told me Kelly knew who'd be blamed if Hellen didn't cross safely. As soon as Hellen stepped forward, Kelly made the rest of us withdraw eight or ten paces from the edge of the trench. I caught my breath as the minutes chugged slowly by, half-expecting to see Hellen's body blown skyward.

Not until Kelly touched my arm and said, "You next, sir," did my breath come flooding back. Then I shuffled forward to the edge of the trench and slid down it, feet first. When I hit bottom, I instantly went on all fours and moved forward. A sharp pain immediately shot through the palms on which I was walking. An instant later my knees felt it, too. At each move, the pain grew worse; I had trouble keeping back a cry. By the time I'd reached the other side

and hoisted myself out, I could feel blood running over my legs and down my wrists.

Hellen was there. "Did you cross an acre of broken glass," he asked.

I nodded. He used short, pungent Anglo-Saxon words to tell his opinion of the Nazis who'd put it there. I had none more expressive of my feeling than Hellen's. But the others who followed us from the trench did. Kelly ordered us to douse our hands and knees with iodine. He stepped across to Mommsen and, I imagine, suggested the same for his crew.

But he did not let our burning sores delay us. The ground fell steadily behind, without incident. Again Kelly stopped. The main trench? Kelly didn't immediately go on hands and knees here as soon as we'd closed ranks. He stood immovable for a long instant, listening, then stepped silently to Mommsen's side and spoke to him a second or two. Again Kelly and Gallagher took him by the feet and he vanished into the trench.

This time he found wire. He clipped it. He stepped over to Mommsen, and the two held a whispered consultation. When Kelly came back, he went to Hellen and spoke into his ear. Hellen disappeared into the trench. I prepared to follow, but Kelly stopped me and drew me close.

'If mines are here, I think they'll be in or near the banks. It's best to jump well clear of the feet, chance the mining of the center, and vault the other bank. Wait a few minutes after I'm gone. Then jump. I'll help you out the other side."

I FELT useless. But Kelly was right. I'd not had training to vault high barriers. If I tried to scramble up a mined bank, I might kill not only myself, but others. The secrecy of our raid would end.

I waited. I was glad I had. It was a good ten feet to the trench bottom. I'd have landed with an easily heard thud if Kelly and one of his men hadn't been there to cushion my landing. They tossed me easily up the other bank. I landed on the hard cushion of a weapons-belt, thrown up by one of the two in the trench. They came up with a rolling tumble themselves.

Kelly there brought the whole detachment around him in a tight circle. His whisper was barely audible. "We're near the enemy now," he said, "and must remain closer to each other. None of us must be picked off singly. At the least sign of danger, drop to the ground and stay there! That's all, now."

The speed of the columns now slowed. I'd have dropped to the ground many times except that the upright back ahead of me moved steadily ahead. It seemed to me that danger was all around me. I read menace in each insect's chirp, the swaying of the trees, and the low soughing of the wind.

But when that guttural German came from close aboard, I flattened out only a split-second after Kelly. I lay there, trembling, partially from excitement, but mostly, I admit, because I was just scared. When I finally raised my head, Kelly was no longer in front of me. Yet I'd seen him fall. And he surely couldn't have moved. I'd have heard him.

WHILE I was still looking at the empty space where the Indian had been, he slithered back into it, lizard-like. I turned my head aside. Mommsen was there, alongside Kelly. The giant corporal had moved right next to me, without my ears recording a sound. And Kelly must have gone to get him.

The two lay and conversed, mouth to ear. They didn't seem in agreement. I could see Mommsen's head shaking a violent negative, but not what was said. Only when Kelly shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "What's the use?" did Mommsen's head stop shaking. Then, as quietly as he'd come, he slipped away. And Kelly slid noiselessly past me, toward the rear of our column.

After Kelly returned, all of us lay quietly for a considerable time. Then Kelly moved off again toward Mommsen's group. When he returned, he gathered us close beside him.

"We're going after the searchlights," I had to strain to catch his words. "I've agreed to Mommsen's wish that he and I go. He and Mapes will take the far one, Gallagher and I the one nearest our landing cove. Hellen will be in charge while we're gone. If you hear shots, the fat will be in the fire. Forget us and wade in slugging! And for God's sake"—I sensed a new urgency in the quiet voice—"let's get our job done right."

The voice died away. Seconds later, Gallagher and Kelly were gone. They simply melted away into the dimness. As I lay there flat on my belly, it came to me why Kelly hadn't wanted Mommsen to lead one raid, why he hadn't willingly gone himself. Fear hadn't led to it, but his sense of responsibility. If both he and Mommsen failed to get back, neither leader appointed by Major Radford would be on hand to see to the proper finish of their job.

My stomach muscles felt as if a steel band held them. It squeezed tighter every moment. I tried, vainly, to go with the raiding pairs to the beach. One stumble, one noise at the wrong time, and the silence which held the island tightly would be shattered. Ten men, without an authorized leader, would have to plunge ahead against an armed outpost, all veteran. I had no doubt the men would try. But trying alone wouldn't be enough. Not if the morning's invasion was to go off on schedule without prior warning to the enemy.

I don't know how long I lay turning over these unpleasant thoughts. Time had lost all meaning. Only sound had it. I knew then the dread lonesomeness of silence accompanied by fear—yet I wanted it to continue.

When a branch to my right crackled sharply, as if trod upon, I started

We heard a groan, then the rat-tat-tat

of our single machine gun. Our inching forward stopped. Off our bellies, we poured forward in a running crouch.

violently. I saw Hellen reach for his knife. I watched his cocked arm, and waited with indrawn breath for the arced throw to follow.

Suddenly Hellen's arm dropped. I turned my head hesitatingly to the right. Gallagher was there. Kelly came in an instant later. They'd redoubled on our trail to get away from the Nazi voice we'd heard, but even then had almost stumbled into the main Nazi nest about fifty yards below our position. A cough had warned them in time to veer off. They side-stepped, crossed the main trench again and headed beachward again.

"Two Nazis were watching the sea with night glasses," Gallagher told us. "They aren't now. They're in it. And with them, the two at the searchlights. None of them ever knew what hit them."

He didn't say how he and Kelly had taken care of the four men. But while he spoke, he was rubbing his knife in the dirt beside him. For a minute I turned sick inside. Yet this was war, and no time for squeamishness. And I was so glad to see Gallagher back that I soon forgot the others had been men too.

MAPES and Mommsen were still out. Waiting for them became tougher every minute. I could guess how jittery Kelly must be about the raiders' absence. If they'd been picked up or killed, the Germans might set a trap into which the whole detachment would fall. No one of us could follow Mommsen's exact path in the darkness to find out where the two were.

And we couldn't wait too long. Firing from the bluff might alert the Nazi force here at any time.

I saw Kelly rise to hands and knees and crawl to Mommsen's column. He brought the four there back with him.

"We can't wait longer," he told us. "We have to figure Mommsen and Mapes either dead or prisoners. That the far searchlight still operates—" The whisper died away as the crouching figure suddenly hugged the ground, stretched out at full length. I did the same. But why I didn't know for a few seconds. Then I too

heard the sound of labored breathing to my left.

My eyes focused in that direction. Mommsen walked unsteadily in. Over his shoulder was the body of Mapes. He deposited his burden on the ground near us, and sank beside it himself, his whole body shaking.

"I killed him. I tell you, I killed him." Even in his anguish, he didn't let his voice rise. "We were on our way back. I was sure he was abreast of me. I heard a noise to the rear. I thought it was a Nazi; I didn't look. Just used my knife. And it was Mapes."

Kelly rose and went to the kneeling man. He slapped Mommsen hard three times across the face with his open hand. "You'll kill more than Mapes," he said brutally. "And I'll kill you, if you warn these Nazis we're here. Get up now! *We* have to go. You'll travel with me."

He turned his back on Mommsen and began dividing his contingent into groups of four, each with a veteran in charge. He ordered them to go down the slight slope as nearly in line as possible, keeping careful watch for rear pickets and carrying out whatever attack their leaders ordered on the machine-gun nests. By the time he'd finished, Mommsen was on his feet.

He murmured an almost curt "Thanks" to Kelly before we started on our wiggling advance. Our movement made me think of that of a side-wheeling worm. At first one section would be ahead, then another. All moved noiselessly.

SUDDENLY our whole human worm stopped wriggling. Ahead of us, just ahead, was a dimly outlined figure, one who'd stomp on us as relentlessly as a gardener would on a cutworm. If our raid on the searchlights were known, that turned back could be a ruse to lead us on.

I watched Kelly. His hands held something white. He raised this a few inches above the ground—once, twice, three times. An instant later he, and Betts—our fourth man—and Mommsen rushed forward cat-footed. Kelly's arm encircled the Nazi's neck, then spun him over his head in a complete somersault. The only sound was the dull thud of the landing body. Mommsen and Betts were instantly atop him. In a few seconds all three were back. We continued our crawl.

Thus far luck had been almost entirely on our side. Nine men of the opposing force were out of the fight; we'd lost one. But fate turned against us almost at once. We heard a torrent of German.

Mommsen spoke to Kelly across me.

"The bastards have discovered the searchlights," he translated. "From here on, there'll be hell to pay."

Kelly stopped the line again and passed the word along. Again we went forward, this time with the sure knowledge that the enemy would be looking for us. We'd catch no more Nazis by surprise.

A dagger of light flashed out from the dimness ahead and to our left, followed almost instantaneously by the blast of gun-fire. We heard a groan, then the rat-tat-tat of our single machine gun. For a long minute the sky was crisscrossed with flashes as both sides fenced for an opening. Then the blackness came down again, more darkly than ever, I thought.

Our inching forward stopped. Off our bellies, we poured forward in a half-running crouch. I'd have crashed into a cement revetment if Kelly hadn't held out an arm. He forced me to my knees, then crawled to one

ANKABAR and EMILY AXWORTHY

by HAROLD HELFER

THERE are any number of turf stories, but none more Horatio Algeresque than Ankabar, the despised, unwanted colt, and Emily Axworthy, his bedraggled, trudging dam.

Ankabar and Emily Axworthy originally belonged to E. J. Gould, of Kearney, Nebraska. Ankabar was an ungainly loutish colt. He had hollows above his eyes and his neck didn't seem to be on straight. When Mr. Gould shipped a carload of his colts to Chicago for sale, all sold but Ankabar. Someone actually did put in a bid of $35 for him at the auction but it was only done for the laugh. The bidder failed to claim him—even for that measly sum—after the sale. So Ankabar went back to Kearney.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gould had borrowed some money—$275—from a Peoria, Ill., trotter fancier, Harry J. Schmoeger. When the time came to pay up, Mr. Gould didn't have the money. He persuaded Mr. Schmoeger to take Ankabar in lieu of the cash. Not wishing to be an old meanie, Mr. Schmoeger agreed.

He didn't know what he would do with the clumsy colt. He tried to sell him and get some of his money back, but no one would have the animal.

In the meantime, Mr. Schmoeger's three young daughters, Ann, Katherine, and Barbara, took a fancy to the shunned, looked-down-upon colt. No one had even bothered to give him a name. So, using the first letters in each of their names, they gave him one: Ankabar.

Mr. Schmoeger decided that as long as it looked as if he was going to have the unseemly Ankabar around, he might as well see what could be done about training him as a racing trotter along with the other horses in his stable.

The trainers shook their heads. They said it was "impossible." Ankabar just didn't have what it took. He'd never make the grade.

Mr. Schmoeger told them just to go ahead and do the best they could with him; there was nothing else to do.

In his first race, Ankabar astonished everyone by finishing in second place. In his second race, he proved it hadn't been a fantastic flash-in-the-pan happening by again finishing in the money, this time in third place. And in his next race he came in ahead of the field.

IN the following season Ankabar won four of his five races. He went on to become one of the immortals of the trotting world. Called the "perfect trotting-machine," he became the Grand Circuit champ, copping, among other honors, the Calumet Cup and the Tavern and Ohio Stakes.

Mr. Schmoeger, his heart filled with bursting pride, acquired Ankabar's sire, Bingen Silk. Then he went over to Mr. Gould's place in Kearney to buy Ankabar's dam, Emily Axworthy.

She was gone—she'd been traded away for a couple of mules!

To track down Emily Axworthy, Mr. Schmoeger hired a private investigator. It took him two months but he finally located her in Union City, Indiana, dragging a huckster's wagon through the streets!

Mr. Schmoeger gave the peddler $100 for his cart-puller. Proudly proclaimed as the dam of the illustrious Ankabar, Emily Axworthy spent the rest of her life in ease and dignity at the Schmoeger place.

end of the structure and stuck a wary head around it.

A full description of the next few minutes is impossible. I caught just a glimpse of Kelly ducking back and angrily wiping blood from a wound above his eye before he pushed me flat on the ground and told me to stay there.

Then the whole place erupted.

The cries of the wounded mingled with the sharp crack of rifles and pistols. The sky became furrowed with angry light. The acrid smell of heavier explosives set me coughing. Then the firing began to sputter. Finally it died. I was sure we'd been licked—but had to find out. I crept around the revetment and saw inside it.

The battle wasn't over. It was now being fought hand to hand. Kelly and Mommsen had their backs to the wall. Four Nazis were on their feet, but four—and Betts—lay on the floor quiet forever.

The four living Nazis stayed well clear of the flashing two-edged knives Mommsen and Kelly held. Then Mommsen saw a chance to cut the odds. He stepped a few feet away from the wall. He got his man but couldn't clear his weapon. Another Kraut closed in, pistol butt upraised.

I wanted to shriek a warning. But Kelly came from nowhere and sent the pistol spinning with a sprawling kick. Before he could get back on his feet, he was knocked to the ground. Blood poured over his already gory face.

I've seen Nebraska tornadoes in action. Mommsen was like them, then. He grabbed the Nazi who'd hit Kelly, and using him as a scythe, cut down the other two. When he'd finished, the only sound in that cement-cased tower was the low moaning of the German. But Kelly lay still, too still.

Mommsen half-turned toward the Indian, then sighted my scared face. "Stay with Kelly," he said gruffly. "I'll see how the others are coming."

THOUGH he wasn't gone long, I saw Kelly's eyes flicker once in his absence. I had no chance to tell Mommsen. He brought back two seriously wounded men, two not badly—all that were left of our detachment, and six sullen German prisoners.

When he'd finished dressing the wounds, both of prisoners and men, he came and stood by Kelly. "Well, Sarge," he said, emotion in his voice, "we've done our job."

He almost fell over backward when he heard a weak voice from the floor say: "Hell! That's what we were supposed to do."

For a second Mommsen didn't answer. Then he said: "If that isn't just like an Indian! Lying flat on his back to let a white man do his job."

The words were as insulting as those I'd heard Mommsen say aboard ship. But they had no bite for Kelly. He just grinned and wangled a smoke from the speaker.

Before the almost intact contingent came down from the bluffs, Kelly was on his feet, though a bit shaky. The German prisoners had dug graves for our men and would for their own. And I knew what the Major's hole card had been. It was an Indian nicknamed Kelly who was game to take the toughest way to keep bright the name of the First Special Service Unit.

"I killed him. I thought it was a Nazi. And it was Mapes."

HELL-BENT for ELECTION

A complete book-length novel

by EDWARD S. FOX

Illustrated by BENTON CLARK

THE SENSE OF DANGER CAME TO HIM LIKE A half-remembered face; a nameless thing that hid in the steady throb of the packet's engines and gnawed at the security confidence had bred within him. He rubbed his finger along the edge of his cards, and he noticed for the first time the chill of the river breeze as it blew across the deck and in the window at his elbow. He drew his coat together, and looking up, met the steady calculating gaze of the man seated across the table from him.

"How many, Kimlocke?" The man had a flat, brutish face and hands that gripped his cards as though they were iron instead of paper.

"Two," Kimlocke said, and laid down a black queen and five. He picked up the ones the other shoved across the table toward him and said bluntly: "How do you know my name?"

The big man exchanged glances with his bearded companions on either side of him, and there was satisfaction in the smile that crossed his lips. He made no effort to answer the question—nor would he, Kimlocke decided.

Kimlocke fingered his cards uneasily. He'd signed the passenger list under a different name; and felt confident no one on board knew him. Now, with his anonymity gone, and that confidence shaken, he tried to fit the pieces together. First the big man had come up to him on deck and asked if he would care for a friendly game before the packet docked at Memphis. He'd known that any game with this giant was apt to be anything but friendly; but that had made it all the more interesting, and he'd accepted. They had come here to the saloon and been joined by these other two. But, to his knowledge, he had never laid eyes on any of them before.

"We boarded the packet at Cairo to have a talk with you on a matter of mutual interest." The big man's voice was as deep as the boat's whistle. "Name's Jarrett —Tate Jarrett; clothing merchant. These two gentlemen with me are my partners."

The last two statements were so obviously a lie they startled Kimlocke. Black dirt lay under Jarrett's fingernails, and though some effort had been made to brush his shaggy head, strings of hair hung down over his eyes and ears like the frayed ends of a rope. He was a river tough, nothing more. And not a very clever one, Kimlocke reflected, to make such a plainly false claim to respectability.

"We came to talk politics," Jarrett said, "and to bargain with you."

"You came to the wrong place."

Jarrett held up a huge hand restrainingly. "Hear me out first. It may be to your profit."

"What sort of profit do you have to offer?" Kimlocke smiled.

"Money profit." Jarrett reached into his pocket and laid a silver coin on the table in front of him. "Two thousand, five hundred of those, my friend."

Kimlocke looked at the coin. "For cutting whose throat?" he asked slowly.

"No killing to be done." Jarrett's reply was made in all seriousness. "You only have to use your influence on someone."

"And who might that be?"

"Your father."

There was a moment's silence while Kimlocke and the big man regarded each other level-eyed.

"You'd better explain," Kimlocke said finally.

"It's simple," Jarrett said. "Your father owns the biggest newspaper in Tennessee; but he's using it to canvass for the wrong party."

"In your opinion," Kimlocke said.

"In our opinion," Jarrett agreed. "We want Clay Abbott elected Senator to the United States Congress."

"Clay Abbott is an Andrew Jackson man," Kimlocke answered shortly, "and my father isn't."

"Your father might be persuaded to change."

"I don't think so."

"Clay Abbott's a good man."

"I don't know anything about Abbott," Kimlocke said; "but however good he might be, or you claim him to be, he isn't in the same class as the opposition candidate."

Jarrett's face was blank and inscrutable. "Crockett's a traitor. He was with Andy Jackson in the Florida and Louisiana campaigns, then turned and went against him."

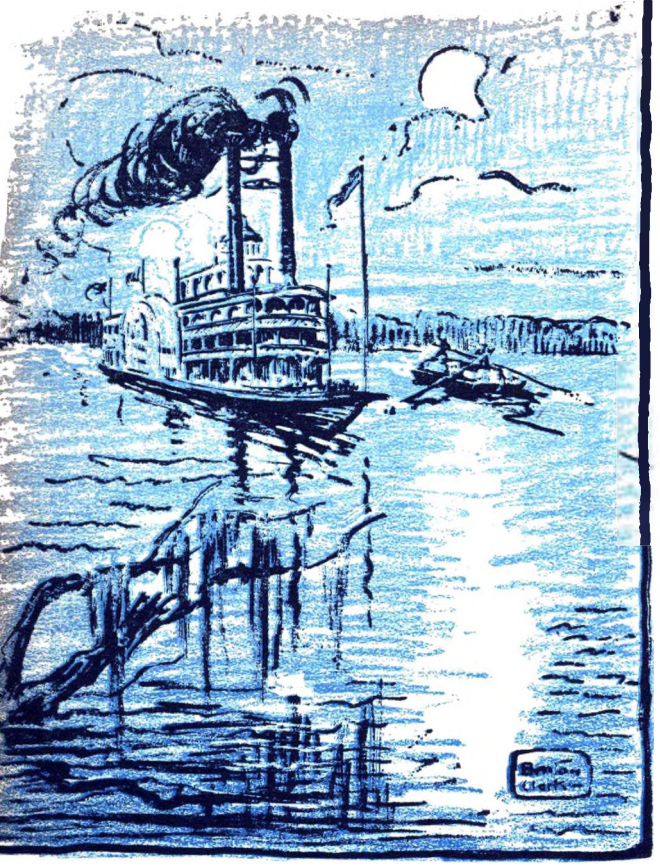
"Davy Crockett turned against dirty politics," Kimlocke replied easily. "Davy takes orders from the people, and the people only. That's why they'll reëlect him."

"Then you refuse our offer?"

Kimlocke laughed. "I couldn't change my father if I wanted to—which I don't."

Jarrett laid down three cards and dealt himself three from the deck. He pushed the coin out in front of him. "Open," he said.

Kimlocke looked at the money, then at Jarrett, and the sense of danger, lulled temporarily by the talk of politics, returned with a rush. Jarrett's proposition was ridiculous; nor did he think Jarrett himself had had any great hope of winning him over to it. It was apparent now in his quick indifference. . . .



"We boarded the packet at Cairo to have a talk with you on a matter of mutual interest."

So Jarrett was either duller than he'd thought. Or cleverer. Or was Jarrett stalling to keep him here in the saloon while still a fourth member of their gang went through his cabin?

For the briefest of seconds Kimlocke's eyes studied Jarrett; then he laid down his cards. "I'm out," he said, and rose swiftly to his feet. "If you gentlemen will excuse me."

"Not quitting, are you?"

"Just tired of sitting," Kimlocke answered steadily. "Think I'll take a stroll."

"What's your hurry? The game's hardly begun."

Kimlocke picked up his beaver hat and gloves from the empty chair at the next table. "Good day, gentlemen."

"Wait!" Jarrett surged to his feet, and the other two men rose with him. "We'll go along with you, friend. We need a little exercise too."

Kimlocke looked at each of the three men in turn, and with a shrug walked across the room. His shoulders nearly filled the wide doorway, and because of his great height he had to duck his head. He was as big a man as Jarrett, but his strength was the supple grace of a panther; and his eyes were clear and held a suggestion of recklessness in them.

As he stepped into the sunshine of the deck he said, "Damn!" fiercely under his breath. He'd felt confident that no one but himself and his father, and Nicholas Biddle of the United States Bank in Philadelphia, knew he was carrying twenty thousand dollars in campaign funds. He was certain Mr. Biddle had used every precaution to keep his mission, and the transfer of the twenty thousand, under cover. But there must have been a leak somewhere. He thought of his father's letter asking him to bring the money to Memphis. His father had warned of the possibility of trouble.

He moved along the deck, and Jarrett and the two men moved with him, a pace or two to the rear. He enjoyed a good fight when it came his way, but not when somebody else's money was at stake. He drew a deep breath when he saw his pursuers following so close, swore softly once again. He had been carelessly overconfident, and had left his pistol in his cabin.

He quickened his pace toward a door halfway down the deck that led into the cabins. He turned his head until he could see his pursuers out of the corner of his eye. They were right behind him, the big man in the lead, his little round eyes steady and calculating.

Kimlocke's muscles tightened; but before he could make a break, a yell came across the water from a passing steamer and its tow of flatboats. At the same instant bells clanged furiously on board the packet. The pilot leaned out his wheelhouse window, a megaphone at his lips.

The packet's engines grew still, and in the hush all on board could hear the shouting and cursing from the steamer. It had lost its tow of flatboats. Hawsers had snapped with the strain and the heavily laden scows were now running wild. The current caught them and swung them directly into the packet's path. Passengers crowded the packet's rails. A woman screamed as it became apparent there would be a collision.

More bells clanged from the engine-room, and great clouds of smoke billowed from the packet's stacks as her paddle-wheels thrashed the water in reverse. The pilot withdrew his head from the window, and he could be seen standing calm and straight behind his wheel. A broken tow was not an uncommon thing on the river. It was like the shifting currents and the sandbars that suddenly appeared beneath the waves, just one of the many unexpected dangers that would tear a hole in a boat and send her plunging to the bottom. It was, Kimlocke thought briefly, somewhat like a man's destiny.

He tore his glance from the impending collision and turned to the door that led to the cabins. He had one foot over the sill when a heavy hand descended on his shoulder and wrenched him around roughly. It caught him unaware; but he kept his balance, and spinning with it, drove his fist hard into Jarrett's stomach. Jarrett stumbled backward, doubling up, choking for breath; then his two companions leaped around him and closed in. Kimlocke lashed right and left with his fists, and drove them back savagely. Before they could recover, he spun to the door again and lunging through it slammed it shut in their faces.

Kimlocke leaped down three steps to a gloomy passageway that turned right for half the length of the boat. Quickly he started down the passageway toward his cabin at the far end. Wall lamps rattled in their brackets, and he felt the packet swerve and heel over as the pilot sought to swing around the barges. He caught himself against the wall, ran swiftly down the passage.

But he had gone only a few steps when the sound of boots behind him and Jarrett's deep voice saying, "After him!" brought him up short. He couldn't make his own cabin. He tried the one nearest. It was locked; he tried the next, and the latch lifted and the door swung open against the pressure of his hand, and he stepped forward and darted inside, turning and closing the door after him. The cabin was in semi-darkness, and filled with a light sweet odor. He heard the rush of feet go by outside and he opened the door a crack, and smiled when he saw Jarrett and his companions. He knew they would look for him in his cabin. Not finding him there, they would hunt for him about the boat. That was when he could go for his pistol.

Kimlocke sniffed the air, suddenly realizing that the odor he had noticed was a woman's perfume. He turned his head at a slight sound behind him; then he turned all the way around fast and stared at a dark shape standing in the gloom in the center of the room. He stepped nearer and now he saw it was a large fat colored woman. Her eyes were two white moons staring at him fearfully. In her hands she held a water pitcher and a glass.

She fell back against the wall, and it was then Kimlocke saw the girl standing rigidly beside the bunk. Her shoulders were bare, and she was holding a dress in front of her with one hand. In her other hand, pointing squarely at his chest, was a pistol, small and short-barreled.

"What are you doing in my cabin?" Her voice was cool and steady.

Kimlocke removed his hat. "I'm sorry to have intruded this way," he said, "but the door wasn't locked—"

"Get out," she interrupted him.

From the corridor outside came the rough sound of Jarrett's voice. "In a minute," Kimlocke answered.

With her gun-barrel the girl motioned the colored woman to draw the curtains from the window. There was a rustle of skirts behind Kimlocke, then daylight streamed into the cabin. With it, surprise appeared on the girl's eyes.

"Mr. Kimlocke!" she exclaimed.

RECOGNITION came to Kimlocke at the same moment. He'd been standing by the rail at Cairo, watching this girl and her colored mammy come up the gangplank, when she'd glanced up and for an instant their eyes had met. He remembered thinking, "What a pretty girl;" then she'd disappeared into the crowd on deck. He'd seen her once more, in the dining saloon a short while later; and for a second time their glances had met, and held briefly. It was all, but it had impressed him. And evidently it had impressed her.

"My name seems to be known to everyone on this packet," he said in surprise. "And it was supposed to be more or less of a secret. How did you know it?"

"You were pointed out to me when I was waiting to board the packet."

"Pointed out by whom?"

The girl flushed. "Aren't you rather inquisitive?"

"Very," Kimlocke admitted. "Who pointed me out?"

"Mr. Oran Garth," she answered stiffly.

"And who is Mr. Oran Garth?"

The red spots had grown in both of her cheeks. "You should know. He's from your home city of Memphis."

Kimlocke shook his head. "I haven't been home in three years."

"He's my uncle's campaign manager."

Kimlocke raised an eyebrow.

"Clay Abbott," she replied.

Kimlocke whistled his surprise softly, and regarded the girl with fresh interest. "I feel a little like the poor mouse who found himself inside a hornet's nest," he said. "This boat is swarming with Jackson people."

He remembered Jarrett, and turning to the door, slid the bolt in place. Then he drew the curtains across the window. The colored mammy watched him nervously.

He turned back to the girl. "You didn't tell me your name."

The gun in her hand had wavered, but she leveled it firmly as he approached and stopped within an arm's-length of her. She was still holding the dress tightly across her breasts, and it covered her nearly to the floor. She was slender and fair, and her hair was arranged in a coil of braids across the top of her head. The dress was green taffeta; the straps over her bare shoulders white cotton.

"You'd better give me that gun," Kimlocke urged.

She moved back against the bunk.

"Your friends are outside," he explained, "and I may have more need of it than you."

"I have no friends on this boat," she replied.

Kimlocke smiled wryly. "Your uncle's friends, then."

She shook her head. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"A gentleman by the name of Tate Jarrett."

She stared at him.

"Who would like very much to relieve me of twenty thousand dollars," he added.

When her expression still didn't change, he decided that if she wasn't giving him the truth, she was a better actress than he'd thought. But before he could tell her so, there was a knocking on the door. Startled, the girl turned her head.

It was all the opportunity Kimlocke needed. Reaching out, he grasped the gun by the barrel, and in one motion, twisted it down and out of her hand. She made a startled grab for it with both hands, but he stepped back quickly. She stood before him a moment in white petticoat and bodice; then she snatched up her dress from the floor where it had fallen and covered herself. Her face was scarlet.

When she took a step toward the door, Kimlocke moved back against the wall. He looked at the priming of his gun. He'd run as far as he was going to.

The knock was repeated, but the girl hesitated. Her lips were compressed, furious; then disregarding his presence, she let the dress fall from in front of her. Seizing it by the hem she bent and drew it on over her head, moving her hips once or twice and pulling it down to fit snugly around her waist.

She stepped to the door then and drew back the bolt. She pulled the door inward halfway.

THERE was a moment's silence; and Jarrett's gruff voice sounded in the corridor. "We didn't know this was your cabin, ma'am." Jarrett's voice was surprised, as apologetic as it would ever be. "We're looking for that Kimlocke fellow."

All the girl had to do was step back and swing the door wide; and Kimlocke slowly cocked his gun.

"There's no one here but myself and my maid." The girl's words were cool and matter-of-fact. In the half-light Kimlocke could see her face. Though the red spots still showed in her cheeks, she'd managed to control her anger. The change was as sudden as it was unexpected, and he scarcely breathed.

"The man you're looking for must be in one of the other cabins," she said.

Jarrett said something to his men in the corridor; then the girl closed the door and bolted it, and turned to face Kimlocke.

He lowered the pistol. "Why didn't you let them in?" he asked.

She put her back to the door and stood there, looking at him. "Certainly not on your account," she answered coldly. "I was thinking of my uncle, and how it would be if there was a fight in the cabin occupied by his niece."

For some reason Kimlocke felt disappointed. "You think fast."

"I'm not exactly new to politics, Mr. Kimlocke." Some of the life seemed to go out of her voice when she added: "I've lived with my uncle since I was twelve and been through four political campaigns with him. This is his second try for the Congress."

"You canvass with him?"

"I help with his speeches—print handbills, do whatever I can to help."

"You haven't told me your name yet."

"Aurelia Devlin," she said.

"You know mine," Kimlocke smiled. "And all about me, no doubt."

"Yes," she said. "Your father owns the *Standard* and he's asked you to come home from your adventuring around the Lakes to help him canvass for Crockett."

Kimlocke laughed.

"There's nothing mysterious about my knowing that," Aurelia said. "It's common knowledge in Memphis."

"And that's where you're going now."

"Yes."

"Then we'll see each other again."

She shook her head, and her manner toward him stiffened. "We're on opposite sides of the political fence; and in case you don't know it, your father and Mr. Garth are enemies. Personal enemies, I mean," she added, "as well as political. Bitterly so."

"What does that matter?"

"Your father has openly insulted Mr. Garth, called him every kind of vile name. The only reason Mr. Garth hasn't taken reprisal, I'm sure, is because of your father's age."

"Maybe Mr. Garth has already taken reprisal," Kimlocke said. "My father writes me that he was attacked and beaten one night a month or two ago."

"Those were river toughs," the girl exclaimed.

"An attempt was made to burn down the newspaper."

"Mr. Garth had nothing to do with that."

"Maybe not. But all of this isn't any reason we can't be friends, is it?"

She moved away from the door. "Get out," she said.

"You haven't answered my question."

"Nor will I," she cried angrily. "Get out before I call those men."

Kimlocke grinned. He didn't think she would do that, and for the second time that day he thought: "She's a pretty girl, a mighty pretty girl."

He stepped toward her, his only intention being to return her gun. Too late he saw her looking at something over his shoulder. Too late he heard the sound of a step behind him.

As he spun, he caught a glimpse of the colored woman and the water pitcher upraised in her hand. He tried to ward off the blow with his elbow, but he wasn't quick enough. It struck, exploding around his ears in a vivid flash of light. And when the flash went out, he plunged to the floor in darkness, and pieces of broken crockery fell all about him.

Chapter Two

A CLOUD OF THICK BLACK SMOKE HUNG FAR out over the river; but now the fireman had closed his drafts, and only white vapor trickled from the packet's stacks as she lay quietly alongside the dock at Memphis. The oily odor of steam and tar blanketed everything sickeningly; the clatter of hand-carts and the shouts and curses of stevedores was loud and raucous, and irritating as the stifling heat.

Scott Kimlocke, father of Beau Kimlocke, anxiously scanned both the passengers on deck and those already filing down the gangplank. He left the shade of the warehouse where he had been standing and pushed through the crowd gathered to meet the packet. His frown deepened. Beau had written he would be on the *River Belle* on the sixteenth; today was the sixteenth and *River Belle* in big gold letters was plainly written across the side of the packet's wheelhouse.

He walked forward to the bow, where a gang of Negroes, stripped to the waist and glistening with sweat, was loading firewood. He paused a second when he noticed the big high-wheeled wagon, painted bright red like a circus wagon, being dragged ashore over a double plank-walk, and the tall thin man who followed in its wake.

The man's sallow face lighted with recognition, and he came forward quickly: "Doctor Loganberry, in case you've forgotten. Two years ago at the election of George Creedy to the State Senate."

"You have a good memory," Kimlocke said, shaking hands. "But what brings you to Memphis?"

"The Abbott-Crockett campaign, naturally. Wherever there's an election, there's people; and wherever there's people, that's where you'll find Doctor Loganberry dispensing words, wisdom and his world-famous wonder drug."

"And Trixy?"

"She's to meet me here the day after tomorrow." Doctor Loganberry sighed. "Sweet Trixy, my love, has been visiting her mother in New Orleans."

"You predicted the last election within one hundred votes," Kimlocke recalled. He recollected, too, that he had lost a fifty-dollar bet to the doctor. "What do you say about this one?"

DOCTOR LOGANBERRY drew a handkerchief from his breast pocket and wiped his perspiring face. "Predicting elections is a hobby of mine. I'm in a position to hear what the constituents are saying behind the politicians' backs, and with the help of the multiplication table and a pen I *have* been able to forecast accurately, haven't I?"

"Why don't you be honest and admit that forecasting, and betting, is a little more than a hobby with you?"

Loganberry didn't seem to have heard the remark. "As to the Abbott-Crockett war, it's too early yet to even attempt a forecast. Strictly as a guess I would say, however—and this is offhand and with no thought of a bet in mind—that Davy Crockett will lose his buckskin britches."

"What makes you think so?"

"Crockett's too honest," Doctor Loganberry replied flatly.

"He's won elections before, and for that very reason."

"This election won't be like those others." Loganberry shook his head. "Garth intends to put his man Abbott into Congress at any cost."

"That's a certainty." Kimlocke nodded agreement. "But I still believe Davy will win."

Loganberry regarded him thoughtfully. "Perhaps you might like to back that statement with a few dollars?"

"I thought you said it was a little early for a wager?"

"It *was*—a minute ago."

Kimlocke laughed. "All right. Never let it be said that I didn't have faith in Davy Crockett."

"Shall we make it fifty? Or a hundred this time?"

"Fifty will do, thank you."

"Something else has just occurred to me this second," Loganberry went on blandly. "As a simple vendor of medicine, I am in a position to hear all, see all, know all. For a small fee, therefore, would you be interested in a weekly, bi-weekly, or even daily, report mailed in to your newspaper from the field of battle? It would include the latest prognostications, prevarications, killings, and what have you, of the campaign."

"I'm hoping my son will cover it for us," Scott Kimlocke replied. "He was due in today from St. Louis."

"Ah, yes." Loganberry wiped the perspiration from his face again. "I saw your son just a while ago."

"Then he's on the *River Belle*," Kimlocke said, relieved.

"He was in a card game," Loganberry nodded, "with three rough-looking individuals."

"Beau can take care of himself."

"So I've heard."

"He likes his card game," Kimlocke admitted. "So much so, I'll probably have to go abroad and drag him away."

"If I were you, I wouldn't delay too long."

"What do you mean?"

The tall man's thin shoulders lifted. "Just that his card-playing friends have an evil reputation on the river; and the odds are three to one."

The feeling of anxiety returned to Kimlocke.

"I'll stop by in a day or so to talk politics, and maybe I'll have a little something for you to publish," Loganberry said.

Kimlocke nodded absently.

"I'll expect you," he said.

He excused himself and walked back along the dock to the gangplank. The passengers were all ashore, standing about in small groups, or dispersing toward a line of carriages drawn up on the levee. He stepped aboard the packet and turned down the deck to the saloon.

One glance showed it was empty, and he returned quickly to the deck. He found the corridor leading to the staterooms, and quickened his steps.

Chapter Three

KIMLOCKE FELT SOMETHING HARD PRESSING against his face, he opened his eyes slowly and saw it was the deck. He was lying face down on the wooden planks, and he tried to think why. He moved, and when some pieces of broken water pitcher came into his line of vision, he lifted his head quickly, remembering.

He rolled over with a groan and sat up, one swift glance showing him he was alone in the cabin. The girl and the colored woman were gone. It all came back to him clearly now, and he reached up a weak hand and gingerly touched a lump on the top of his head. It was sore and sticky, and when he drew his fingers away and looked at them, they were red at the tips.

He rose to his feet unsteadily, went to the window and drew back the heavy curtains. The throbbing inside his head was not so loud, and he was surprised when it came over him that he no longer felt the vibration of the packet's engines under his feet. He looked out at the river and saw two boys paddling a boat, and a haze of smoke lying lazily along the water. A dog barked and then the trundle of cars and the chant of some Negroes reached his ears, and he knew the packet was docked at Memphis.

Kimlocke drew back from the window and leaving the girl's cabin walked quickly down the empty corridor to his own. The door was unlocked, left ajar; he pushed in, then brought up short at the scene of utter confusion that confronted him. His trunks had been broken open and his clothing was strewn about the floor. His bunk was torn to pieces, pulled away from the bulkhead and lying on its side.

He dropped to his knees in a corner and, his fingers tugged at a section of the baseboard. It came away in his hand and he reached in between the partitions separating his cabin from the adjoining one. Carefully he drew out a leather money-belt, and he breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that it was still fat and stuffed with the bills the bank had given him in Philadelphia.

At a knock on the door he rose and looked quickly for his pistol. He searched through his clothes strewn about the floor, but it wasn't there, and he strapped the money-belt around his waist and buttoned his coat over it securely. The knock was repeated, louder this time and more insistent; and the latch lifted and the door swung open.

The man who stood on the threshold was lean and gray with age. His long-tailed coat and the stock around his throat and the tall hat he wore gave his six feet an appearance of great height. He was frowning anxiously, but when his gaze fell on Kimlocke his face cleared. He came eagerly into the room. For a minute they stood looking at each other, their hands tightly clasped.

"You all right?" Scott Kimlocke finally asked.

Kimlocke nodded.

"And the money?"

"Safe."

The elder Kimlocke smiled his relief. "When the boat docked and you didn't come ashore with the other passengers, I was worried."

Beau Kimlocke told his father what had happened.

"Jarrett," Beau concluded. "One of his gang was looking for the twenty thousand while the others kept me occupied in the card game."

"I don't understand how they knew you were carrying the money?"

"I wish *I* knew."

"And who is Jarrett?"

"I can't tell you that, either."

The frown returned to Scott Kimlocke's eyes. "Jackson's crowd will stop at nothing to beat Crockett."

"I saw Crockett at a shooting match once." Beau threw some of his belongings into a portmanteau. "He was a Jackson man then."

"He's one of Jackson's severest critics now," his father said.

Jarrett pushed the coin out. "Open," he said.

"And that's why you want me home—to canvass for Crockett?"

"No." His father shook his head. "Crockett does his own canvassing in his own way, and neither you nor I could improve on it. I want you to follow it for the *Standard*. I need your help—"

The elder Kimlocke hesitated. He walked to the window and looked out at the river. When he spoke again, he kept his back to the room. His voice sounded old, tired. "You've been away since you were eighteen, Beau, and I'd like to have you stay home now. I've missed you."

Kimlocke closed the portmanteau and snapped the lock. In a way he felt as though he were being shut up inside of it. He'd come home with the money, to do his father a favor; but he'd had no intention of staying long. Certainly not for good.

"I'm afraid I've already made other arrangements," he said slowly.

His father turned. "Arrangements that can't be changed?"

"I've promised my help in a venture to the Western Territory."

Kimlocke could sense his father's disappointment. He knew he owed it to his father to stay at home, but it meant routine, dullness, stagnation. And he'd led a free and roving life too long.

His father didn't say anything more; they repacked and put the cabin back in order. When they were ready to leave, Beau carried one portmanteau, his father the other.

"Missing anything?" Scott Kimlocke asked.

Kimlocke tore his glance from the impending collision and turned to the door that led to the cabins.

"Just my pistol." Kimlocke opened the door.

They left the cabin and walked slowly down the corridor. The packet was silent now, and only in the distance was there a hubbub of sound, of voices and of Negroes singing.

But as they turned the corner to go up the short flight of steps leading to the deck, a huge shape loomed before them in the semi-darkness. It was Jarrett. He stood in the doorway, completely filling it; behind him were his two companions and another man, a tall, plate-faced individual; and the thought passed through Kimlocke's head. "He must be the one who searched my cabin."

"Just a minute, friend. You and I didn't get to finish our game." Jarrett moved through the door and blocked the passageway.

Kimlocke shifted the portmanteau to his left hand. "So?"

"The boat will be here for another two hours, and we'll have plenty—"

"Some other time."

"Now," Jarrett said.

Kimlocke shook his head and walked up the steps. He could see the big man's eyes on the bulge under his coat where the money-belt was, and he knew Jarrett was weighing the odds carefully in his big, slow-witted brain.

The two men faced each other, and Kimlocke said softly, "Don't be a fool, Jarrett. You'd never manage it."

Jarrett hesitated, and it was all the edge Beau Kimlocke asked. He knew Jarrett's kind. He put a hand on the big man's chest and pushed him roughly to one side.

With an angry jab of his fist Jarrett smashed his hand away. "Don't touch me," he snarled.

"Then don't try anything," Kimlocke said quietly and shouldered on past the big fellow. The three toughs gave ground, stepping backward to the deck, and he stepped after them and then turned quickly as his father joined him. They walked rapidly down the deck to the stage-plank. Jarrett was standing in the doorway, staring after them with blazing eyes.

"I'll play games with them some other time," Beau said shortly, "when I haven't got all this money on me."

"You stay away from that man," his father said sharply. "I recognize him now. He's one of the Murrell gang—the roughest bunch of pirates on the river; and reportedly working for Oran Garth."

"Who's this Garth?"

"The man who cracks the whip over Clay Abbott."

They walked down the plank and, pushing through the crowd, climbed the bank to the top of the levee. From here they could see the town, an unlovely group of buildings and muddy streets. It had grown since Beau's last visit home. It would grow some more, would soon become a city; and if his father had his way, he, along with the *Standard*, would grow with it, would become a part of it, would become bogged down and mired in its small and narrow existence. But that wasn't what he had come home for.

Scott Kimlocke led the way to his carriage drawn up with some others in a long line along the river front. A Negro coachman took their luggage and loaded it in back, then climbed to the box and picked up his whip. Scott Kimlocke had already taken his seat.

But Beau stood with his foot on the carriage step, watching another as it pulled out of line and drew abreast of where he was standing. He was startled to see the girl in the taffeta dress—the girl from the packet—seated in the back beside an old man, and the fat Negro woman sitting opposite them, bags and boxes piled all around her. The girl turned her head in Beau's direction. He raised his hat with a smile. The girl returned

his gaze coolly until the carriage passed and entered the town.

"A friend of yours?"

Beau turned and found his father regarding him questioningly. "That's the girl I was telling you about," he said quietly. "Aurelia Devlin."

"And that's her uncle, Clay Abbott, with her." Scott Kimlocke shook his head and laughed. "You seem to have met up with quite a few of the Jackson forces on your trip down the river."

"They didn't get what they were after," Kimlocke reminded him.

"No." The elder Kimlocke added thoughtfully: "Nor would I be too sure the girl had anything to do with it. From what I hear, she's had a hard time since her parents died; but she's managed to keep her head above water and is well-liked and well-thought-of. It's a miracle, too. Her uncle's a weakling, a man of very small caliber. He jumps through a hoop whenever Garth snaps his fingers. That's why Garth is backing him. He has representatives in the State legislature; but he needs someone in Washington to keep the Federal Government's nose out of his business ventures.

"Garth's new since you left," Scott Kimlocke went on seriously. "He owns half of Memphis and has interests in cotton and lumber in every county. He's rich, selfish, ambitious—and utterly ruthless."

"It sounds as though it might be an interesting campaign."

"Garth will fight rough," Scott Kimlocke warned again. "As rough as a man can and still keep from swinging at the end of a rope."

Chapter Four

IN THE WEEK THAT FOLLOWED BEAU KIMlocke's arrival in Memphis he was busy and didn't see Aurelia Devlin again. The newspaper building had been gutted by fire only the month previously; a new press was being set up and a new roof and walls built around it. He did all he could to help, and the first copy in twenty-nine days came out with a front-page editorial castigating Garth and Clay Abbott.

"Garth returned from Cairo yesterday in time to read it," Scott Kimlocke said, "and I hope he chokes on it."

They were seated in the small editor's office off the pressroom and Kimlocke could look out the window and watch the Mississippi rolling, dark and muddy and sluggish, past the levee at the edge of town.

"You should know Davy Crockett's background," Scott Kimlocke added hopefully, "—in case you should decide to canvass for the *Standard*."

Davy Crockett, Kimlocke had discovered, had grown to national prominence in the years he'd been away. He was known as the "Coonskin Congressman" and the "Gentleman from the Cane," and nearly everyone Kimlocke met had a story to tell about him. He was one of the best speakers in the House, a homespun orator and statesman. He was a great hunter and woodsman, as Kimlocke had witnessed on one occasion, and it was said of him that he had no real need for a gun when he was hunting; that his gaze was so fierce he had only to glance up a tree and the coons would come showering down about him; that he could swing a six-hundred-pound bear by the tail with ease; or stun him with one blow of his fist.

"When does this venture into the Western Territory begin?" Scott Kimlocke asked.

"Two weeks from yesterday."

"What destination?"

"California."

"For what reason?"

"There's a rumor of gold."

"But a certainty of adventure and excitement."

"Yes," Kimlocke agreed. "Excitement and adventure. New sights and new people. No two days ever alike."

"You're too restless for your own good," his father accused him.

"Perhaps it's an inherited disease," Kimlocke suggested, and went on before his father could interrupt: "You weren't too different when you were my age, were you? You fought in the war under General Washington, left Connecticut to pioneer the Mississippi from St. Louis to New Orleans."

"I settled here in Memphis."

"Only ten years ago."

The elder Kimlocke fell silent. He'd forgotten, and like many fathers didn't like to be reminded, that his youth was far from being a shining example.

AT the sound of voices in the pressroom Kimlocke swung around in his chair. There were footsteps outside, then a man stood framed in the open carrying a gold-headed walking stick. He wasn't a big man, but he was tall and tightly knit, around thirty-five or six years of age; and there was arrogance in his glance, and a sense of power and well-being.

"Mr. Oran Garth," Scott Kimlocke stated flatly. "I won't say welcome, because I don't make a habit of lying."

Garth stepped into the room. "You're rude, Kimlocke." He put his back to a table by the door and leaned easily against it. "You don't hesitate to show your dislike."

"Why should I?"

Garth's gaze rested on Beau appraisingly. "When I heard your son was returning home, I pictured a boy a good deal younger."

"Is that why you sent only four of your thugs to rob me?" Kimlocke asked.

Garth's mouth tightened at the corners, whether in amusement or in anger, Kimlocke couldn't tell.

"The Garth-Abbott gang has all the campaign funds it needs," his father said. "The only reason they tried to steal the twenty thousand from you was to keep it from Crockett, who is not a rich man, and needs help."

Garth's voice was sharp when he said: "We could go on insulting each other indefinitely, but that's not the reason I'm here."

Beau Kimlocke studied Garth interestedly. The man had good control, the sort of person who worked according to a predetermined plan and who followed that plan to a conclusion, by any means within his reach.

"I would like to buy your newspaper," Garth said abruptly. "For cash—and today."

"You try to get rid of me by killing me," Scott Kimlocke replied, "then you try to burn me out; now you want to buy me out. The *Standard* must really be a thorn in your side."

"It has its nuisance value."

The elder Kimlocke laughed shortly. "It's not for sale."

"I'll offer double what it's worth."

"This newspaper is not for sale at any price."

Garth raised his walking stick to his shoulder and rubbed it against his neck. "There isn't time to open up one before the election; but you can count on the *Standard* having competition within the next sixty days."

"That's good," Scott Kimlocke said enthusiastically. "Competition is always welcome, especially when its character is second-grade and on the shady side. The *Standard's* honesty and truthfulness will stand out all the more clearly."

As Kimlocke spun, he caught a glimpse of the colored woman and the water pitcher upraised.

Garth stood up straight, and his face mirrored his annoyance. He turned to the door. He paused a moment with his back to Kimlocke, as though he were about to say something more, then without a word he pushed through it. His footsteps sounded briefly in the pressroom, then he was gone.

"Now you've met the opposition," Scott Kimlocke said gravely. "That's the man Crockett—we—have got to beat; not Clay Abbott."

For two more days, following his meeting with Garth, Beau Kimlocke helped with the newspaper, even to the point of writing some editorials for his father. He wrote an account of his trip down the river and the attempt to rob him of the campaign funds, leaving out only any reference to Aurelia Devlin and their meeting in her cabin.

Then on the sixth night of his homecoming, his father took him to a Jackson rally. To Beau it seemed as though nearly all the town turned out that Saturday night. It was held on the levee above the steamboat landing, and a platform had been built and decorated and benches set up around it on three sides. Lanterns and flares illuminated the scene; on the Mississippi glowed lights from a boat, and the sound of the boat's engines and the thrash of her paddles could be faintly heard.

The speech-making had started when they arrived and took seats inconspicuously at one side. Oran Garth was on the platform introducing the first of the four speakers who sat in a row behind him, waiting their turn. Garth's voice was deep and full-throated, and his delivery smooth and polished. The complexion of his face in the lantern-light was swarthy, but he was handsome and his teeth gleamed when he smiled.

When he was finished talking, Clay Abbott rose and delivered a message from President Jackson that was greeted with a roar of approval and one or two boos from distant points in the crowd. Aurelia Devlin was sitting in the first row under the platform. Beau could see the braids of her hair coiled across the top of her head and interlaced with a bit of blue ribbon. He could see one side of her face and the slight upward slant of her nose, and he thought with a smile of their first encounter.

Abbott finished speaking, and a man named Evans was introduced by Garth. Beau listened with half an ear, saw Aurelia Devlin suddenly rise and walk back up the aisle to stand and talk with friends at the rear. He waited a moment, then rose and followed her. When she saw him coming, she started to turn away.

He touched her arm, and she swung around and looked up at him with defiance in her glance. He raised his hat.

"Please don't shoot," he said. When she didn't answer he added: "You don't remember me?"

He lowered his head and pointed with his finger at the spot that had been bruised. "While it lasted, I called it Aurelia's Knob."

Her features relaxed slightly.

Kimlocke put his hat back on his head and held out his hand. "I forgive you," he smiled.

She hesitated, then touched his fingers lightly. She said, smiling in return: "I'm afraid I owe you an apology."

"No more than I owe you one," he answered. "I'm sorry I had to intrude on you that way."

"Those men might have killed you," she said.

"You know them?"

She nodded. "But I assure you I didn't know they were on board the packet."

Kimlocke studied her thoughtfully. "I know," he said at last, and felt certain now that she had not been in league with Jarrett as he had at first suspected. He could smell the soft fragrance of her perfume, and it was the same that he had noticed on her on the boat. He took her arm and they walked slowly down to the river and sat on an empty bench by the footpath. Lights from the meeting flickered on their backs and they could hear the speaker and the applause and the nearby lap of water against the bank.

"You told me on the packet that you campaigned with your uncle," Kimlocke said. "Did you mean you traveled with him over the State?"

"We have a wagon and a portable printing-press for making handbills," she said. "I run that for him. That's my task."

"You don't sound very enthusiastic about it."

"I hate it," she admitted frankly. "But it's the only way I have of repaying him for all the things he's done for me."

Kimlocke watched the light flicker on the side of her face. "Why don't you like it?"

She was silent as a burst of applause came from the meeting. When it died away, there was a new quality to her voice. To Kimlocke, it sounded like bitterness, and it startled him.

"For one thing, I hate politics," she said fiercely. "And for another, I hate the kind of life my uncle and I have had to lead.

"Eight years ago," she explained, "my father went to the Western Territory and never returned. When my mother died soon afterward, my uncle took me in. He's always been kind, and he's always tried his best to make me happy; but ever since I was twelve, he's been busy with politics. We've never lived longer than a month or two in one place."

Kimlocke was silent.

"I want to grow roots somewhere," she said quietly. "Have a feeling of permanency. I've never had that."

"For myself," Kimlocke said, "I'd just as soon be in jail."

She looked up at him. She started to reply, but stopped when Oran Garth's tall figure stepped out of the shadows and came toward them through the moonlight. He came around the end of the bench and stood in front of her. When he spoke, his tone was curt.

"What are you doing here?"

Kimlocke stood up, but Garth ignored his presence. In the flickering light Garth looked bigger than he had from a distance. There was confidence in his manner, and a boldness to his glance that irritated Kimlocke.

"I met Mr. Kimlocke on the boat last week," Aurelia said, "and we were just becoming friends."

"Doesn't the name Kimlocke mean anything to you?"

"What should it mean?" she asked.

"The Kimlockes own the *Standard*."

"I know that."

"The Kimlockes are the ones who have been attacking your uncle and me so viciously."

"The *Standard* has attacked all of the opposition," Kimlocke pointed out. "That's its function at election time."

Some people had drifted up, and a crowd slowly gathered about the bench by the river. Scott Kimlocke pushed through the crowd and stood beside his son.

"Crockett doesn't know how lucky he is having you on his side," Garth said mockingly.

"Crockett'll win with or without our help."

"Think so?" Garth's teeth flashed in a smile. "Want to bet on it?"

The crowd fell silent as Garth continued in loud tones: "Let's make it an interesting bet while we're at it. You have your paper; I own the Princess Saloon and gambling hall, and the hotel next to it. I'll bet those against your paper that Crockett is defeated."

Kimlocke said: "What makes you think we want your gambling hall or your hotel?"

A murmur rang through the crowd, and someone shouted: "They know who's going to win, all right."

"How about it?" Garth was grinning now.

The elder Kimlocke hesitated for just an instant; then he said, "We'll take your bet."

Garth turned to the crowd and shouted: "Witness that?"

A roar of aye's was his answer, and Beau looked at his father. There was anxiety beneath the older man's confident exterior and Beau smiled reassuringly. "You can count on me for the canvass, at least," he said slowly. "I'll see this fight through to a finish now."

Chapter Five

THEY HAD BEEN COMING INTO THE SETTLEMENT all morning, in two's and in three's and whole families, on foot and on horseback and in wagons; tall, rawboned men and sunbonneted women and tow-headed children. They came out of the forest, the smell of earth on their homespun clothes, and the men gathered in small groups and talked of crops and politics, and the women gossiped, and the children played games and raced and screamed and fought amongst themselves. By noon three hundred people were gathered in the meadow back of the long line of cabins.

Beau Kimlocke crossed the meadow to his wagon drawn up in the shade of the mill by a small stream. A white tarpaulin was stretched over the top; inside there was a small printing-press and Simon Cootes, his assistant, busy setting up type. Cootes was a little bald-headed man with a long, beaklike nose and watery blue eyes. He worked in his shirtsleeves and he said without looking: "Almost finished."

Beau watched him lock in the type and start the press going. Cootes turned the wheel with his hand and fed in a sheet or two of paper, then stopped and handed them to Kimlocke. "We'd better check it," he said.

"THE CANDIDATES," was printed across the top of the page in black-face type. "'Colonel David Crockett,'" Cootes read aloud, "'soldier in the Creek war and the Florida campaign, woodsman, hunter, and United States Congressman. Known to all men for his integrity and devotion to duty, he is your representative in the national government. Keep him there, and he will continue to serve you faithfully and efficiently.'"

Cootes paused, then went on: "'Clay Abbott—drifter. Terms in Congress—none. Experience, none. Advisor—Oran Garth, gambler, dancehall proprietor and cheap politician.

"'These are the candidates—one with a long and enviable record of achievements; the other unknown and untried. The choice will be yours. Choose wisely. Choose Crockett.'"

"It'll do as a starter," Kimlocke said, "and until I find out more about this man Crockett."

COOTES started the press again. He printed several hundred of the handbills, and Kimlocke walked through the meadow, giving them out. He saw that every settler had one, saw the interest with which they were received, and returned to the wagon with a feeling of satisfaction.

"Need some more?" Cootes asked.

Kimlocke shook his head. "Not just now."

He had been watching a wagon drawn up on the fringe of the crowd. It was bright red, and built like a house with windows on either side and a roof and a porch in the back. "DOCTOR LOGANBERRY'S FAMOUS REMEDY FOR PAIN," was painted prominently on the walls and roof. Doctor Loganberry, Kimlocke surmised, was the tall, thin man on the back porch selling medicine to the crowd. He was a solemn, sallow-faced man, nearly bald. He wore a loud checked suit, and his voice was shrill and singsong.

He finished his talk, and then a young girl who had played a banjo and sung songs earlier stepped out from behind the wagon. She passed through the crowd with a basketful of bottles, and when the settlers began to drift off, Kimlocke walked over. Loganberry jumped down and shook hands with him.

"I know your father," he said. "I intended stopping by the *Standard* last week but was busy fixing up my wagon here. I read your handbill," he added. "It should set off the fireworks in good style."

Kimlocke said: "How's business?"

The medicine-man pursed his lips. "I can't complain, I guess."

"I've heard of your remedy."

"Who hasn't?" Loganberry's eyes twinkled. "It's known all over the world." The bald head bobbed inside the wagon, came out with a bottle. "Here, friend, with my compliments. Good for anything that ails you. Guaranteed to make you gay. Guaranteed to make you young. Guaranteed—"

"—to make you drunk."

The voice that came from behind Kimlocke was soft and drawling; he turned and met the flashing eyes of the girl with the basket. Her lips curled in a half grin, her eyes meeting his boldly, sizing him up. She was small and soft and round, and her hair fell in dark ringlets about her face and over shoulders left bare by the bright gypsy costume she was wearing. It was a daring sort of dress, with the bodice cut low over her breasts.

She swayed a little from the hips. "I saw you in Memphis the night of the rally. I saw you another time on the street. And still another day when you were coming out of the newspaper office with your father."

"It sounds as though you were following me," Kimlocke teased.

"Don't flatter yourself." Her eyes danced. "You're not that good looking."

"Oh." He made it sound disappointed. "No?"

She laughed. "You're silly, Mr. Beau Kimlocke; but I like silly people."

KIMLOCKE glanced at Loganberry, saw the shadow of annoyance in the thin man's frown, saw the jealousy poorly concealed.

But Trixy's attention was diverted at that moment. She stood on her toes and looked beyond Kimlocke in sudden interest. "Look there!"

The two men turned, and following her pointing finger, saw a carriage come into the meadow. Behind it was a canvas-topped wagon driven by a Negro. Aurelia Devlin rode in the carriage with her uncle and Oran Garth.

"The opposition has arrived," Loganberry said soberly. "Abbott's here. Now all we need is Crockett."

The meadow on four sides was lined with buggies and carriages and old farm wagons. The settlement, a hundred miles from Memphis, was like hundreds of others scattered through the wilderness, a huddle of log cabins, a church, a trading-post and the mill where the farmers brought their grain for grinding. It was here in the meadow that they met for all occasions; for their turkey-shoots and their weddings and their funerals and their politics.

Kimlocke watched the carriage containing Aurelia Devlin as it crossed the meadow. He hadn't seen Aurelia since that night in Memphis more than two weeks before, but he'd heard certain bits of gossip that he'd had trouble understanding. Garth, so this gossip had it, was paying serious court to Miss Devlin. And she—this was the part he had trouble believing—was not entirely averse to his attentions.

"They've brought their own press wagon, same as you," Loganberry said, "and just wait until they start printing!" He whistled loudly and held his nose. "Brother, if you've got a past, it'll be well aired from now on."

"Miss Devlin operates the press," Kimlocke said. "I don't think there'll be any of that."

Loganberry shot him a keen look, then handed Trixy her banjo. "Music, my dear. I see a few in the crowd who are still without a bottle of our wonderful medicine. Quickly! Quickly!" He gave Kimlocke a second bottle. "Try it, brother. It can't do any more than kill you."

Kimlocke turned the bottle over in his hand skeptically.

"It's a secret formula known only to Doctor Loganberry and his assistant, Doctor Gaudet." Loganberry added out of the corner of his mouth: "Water for profit, blackberry juice for color, alcohol to bring 'em back for more." He stood up and shouted: "All right, folks; here we are, Doctor Loganberry's Famous Remedy for Pain."

Trixy mounted the platform. She winked at Kimlocke and began playing her banjo; and she sang a song in a voice that was deep and husky and pleasant. Kimlocke listened for a minute, and then as a new crowd began to gather, he walked back to Simon Cootes, who was seated under a tree, sewing buttons on his coat.

"We'll have more work later," Kimlocke promised.

"If you have anything that needs mending," Cootes said, "I'll be glad to do it for you. I used to be a tailor before I came to work for your father. Sometimes I think I'm a better tailor than I am a printer; but working for the *Standard* I have a steady salary. That's everything to a man with a wife and four children."

A commotion across the clearing drew Kimlocke's attention, and it was then for the second time that he beheld Davy Crockett, the Coonskin Congressman. He came striding out of the forest, a great tall man dressed in fringed leggings and hunting-shirt, and with a coonskin cap on his head, bushy tail hanging down behind. A rifle was slung carelessly over his shoulder.

Shouts of greeting rose from the crowd; then a settler's voice roared: "Make way there. Make way for David Crockett."

And instantly came his reply, gruff but not unkindly: "Stand where you are. David Crockett can make way for himself."

Without faltering in his stride, the woodsman pushed through the throng to the big tree stump where Clay Abbott and Garth and Aurelia were standing. He brushed off his cap to Aurelia, and shook hands with the men; and a cheer rose from the crowd at this gesture of friendliness.

With the arrival of Crockett, the settlers swarmed about the tree stump and clamored loudly for the speaking to begin. Kimlocke walked nearer, until he was standing behind Crockett and only a dozen paces from Aurelia. Her quick color showed she was aware of his presence; but she didn't look his way. He met Garth's gaze, and he saw him say something to Clay Abbott, who swung around and stared at him with an angry frown.

CROCKETT and Abbott tossed a coin to see who would speak first. Crockett lost, and he handed his rifle to a settler and mounted the stump amidst a deafening cheer from the crowd.

"What're you going to talk about, Davy?" a voice yelled out. "The affairs of the nation?"

"Tell us how you made your last batch of whisky," another shouted.

"How about something to drink right now," a third bellowed. "It's going to be mighty hard listening to you, Davy, dry like we are."

A roar of approval burst from a hundred thirsty throats, and with a wave of his hand Crockett stepped down off the tree stump and strode toward a nearby cabin that had been set up as a bar to deal with just such emergencies. Under the guns of their wives' disapproving glances, the men crowded noisily after him and surrounded the cabin.

"There should be a law against selling liquor at political meetings," a voice said at Kimlocke's elbow, and he turned to see Doctor Loganberry standing beside him. Loganberry clucked his tongue disapprovingly. "Entirely too much competition for Doctor Loganberry's Famous Remedy for Pain."

Kimlocke watched the sharp-featured, sun-bonneted wives of the settlers as they waited impatiently in the hot sun for their men. His glance returned to Aurelia Devlin, and he saw the determined manner in which she continued to avoid his gaze. Garth and Clay Abbott were hard put to it to conceal their impatience and annoyance at the delay.

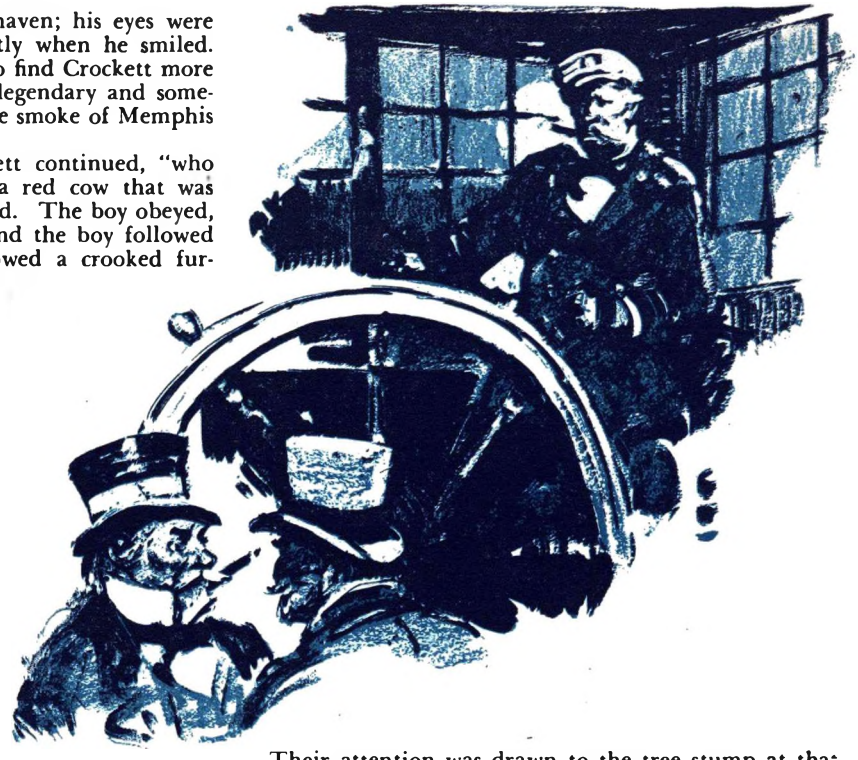
Half an hour later Crockett came out of the cabin and strode back with the crowd at his heels; he mounted the stump again and waved his hands for quiet.

"I don't know how you folks feel about it," he began, and spun slowly on his heel, his gaze sweeping slowly over the faces upturned to him, "but a lot of my old friends these days are criticizing me for turning against Andy Jackson, and I'd like to tell you now why I did."

"Go ahead, Davy, tell us!" rose from the crowd. Crockett had spoken seriously, and his voice was calm

and convincing. He was smooth-shaven; his eyes were clear and keen and twinkled slightly when he smiled. Kimlocke was agreeably surprised to find Crockett more of a flesh-and-blood man than the legendary and somewhat uncouth figure generated in the smoke of Memphis gossip.

"I knew a farmer once," Crockett continued, "who told his son to plow straight for a red cow that was standing at the other end of the field. The boy obeyed, but the cow wouldn't stand still, and the boy followed her all over the field, and he plowed a crooked furrow until his father came back in a rage and stopped him." Crockett paused, then went on, his voice rising to emphasize his words: "I don't intend to be like that boy. I'll follow Jackson as long as he goes straight; but I'll never plow a crooked furrow."



The pilot could be seen standing calm and straight behind his wheel. A broken tow was not an uncommon thing on the river.

"Hurray for Crockett!" rose on every side, but to Kimlocke, listening closely, the hurrahs didn't sound as enthusiastic as they had before. It was struck home to him then, with force, what he had been told many times in recent days, that Andy Jackson was still popular with the people of Tennessee, his own State.

Crockett spoke less than five minutes more. He told briefly of a new and simpler method of molding bullets for his rifle. Then he promised to uphold the wishes of his people in Congress, and he stepped down in a thunderous roar of approval.

WHEN Clay Abbott started to speak, Crockett pushed his way out of the crowd and stood under a tree at one side. Walking over, Kimlocke introduced himself.

Crockett's smile was quick and friendly. His fingers, as they shook hands, closed over Kimlocke's like steel bands.

"I know Scott Kimlocke," the woodsman said. "I'm glad to know his son. What brings you here to the wilderness?"

Kimlocke told him briefly, pointing out his wagon and Simon Cootes still seated in the shade, sewing on buttons. "I'll print up some more bills, if you'll outline your canvass."

"I'm against Jackson, horse and collar," Crockett said promptly. "I stand on my record, which is there for everyone to see. More specifically, I'm against the tariff, the moving of the deposits from the United States Bank, and Jackson's setting Van Buren up as his successor." He paused. "It's not through choice that I'm running for reelection, I want you to understand. I feel it's my duty, that there's no one else to oppose Jackson's grab for power; and heaven help Tennessee if that dolt Clay Abbott is elected."

Their attention was drawn to the tree stump at that moment, and they listened while Abbott spoke, outlining his platform in a dull, colorless way. Then Garth mounted the stump. Garth's talk was as different from Abbott's as the character of the two men. His was a denunciation of Crockett, and it was as vicious as it was sly. All of Garth's references to Crockett held a double meaning. He referred to Crockett repeatedly as "That gentleman from the cane," with the emphasis on the gentleman in such a way his listeners knew just the opposite was meant.

Kimlocke watched Crockett's face, saw his mouth tighten at the corners.

Halfway through Garth's speech a large flock of guinea-fowl appeared on the edge of the forest back of where he and Crockett were standing. They seemed tame enough and unafraid of the crowd, but they set up such a clatter that finally Garth was forced to stop.

"Chase them away," he shouted to some boys, and he tossed them a handful of coins. "Chase those birds out of here."

The boys scrambled for the money, then turned and charged the guinea-fowl, who took to flight with a loud chattering. When all was quiet again, Garth continued with his speech, talking for ten minutes more.

When he was finished, Crockett stepped forward a pace and called, "Hello, Mr. Garth," in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the meadow. Garth looked up from shaking hands with settlers, and the crowd turned as one man and looked at Crockett expectantly. When he had all their attention, Crockett continued:

"Well, Mr. Garth, I'm certainly glad to find someone at last who can understand the language of the fowls. You and your friends have referred to me rather unkindly in your speeches. That's understandable, coming from politicians such as you are. But when a group of my friends and constituents, the guinea-fowls, came and shouted, 'Crock-ett, Crock-ett, Crock-ett,' you stopped and had them driven away. That, sir, was downright ungenerous of you."

A shout of laughter burst from the crowd. Garth's expression didn't change but Kimlocke saw the way his

They had been coming all morning, on horseback and in wagons.

mouth tightened at the corners, and he knew Crockett had scored a painful hit. Abbott scowled angrily; but Kimlocke thought he caught a trace of a smile on Aurelia's lips.

"And so he takes the wind right out of their speech-making." Kimlocke turned to Loganberry who stood at his elbow. "Crockett fights with his wits, and he fights clean, and that's what these people know and like about him. He's going to be elected. I'd bet my last dollar on it."

"And lose it just the way you're going to lose your newspaper," Loganberry answered soberly.

Kimlocke glanced sharply at the medicine man. "Why so positive of that, both you and Trixy?"

Loganberry shrugged his thin shoulders. "Observation and experience. It's as I told your father last week; politics is sort of a hobby with us. We cover all the elections, big and small. We see and talk with a great many people. We have, you might say, our fingers on the pulse of things."

"I'd like it better if Crockett didn't oppose Jackson quite so openly," Kimlocke agreed.

"Then he wouldn't be Crockett," Loganberry answered quickly. "Besides, there's one other factor in this election you haven't taken into account. All by itself, it's strong enough to beat Crockett."

"What's that?" Kimlocke asked curiously.

"Look yonder."

Loganberry pointed a long finger across the meadow to some men just coming into the settlement. With a start, Kimlocke recognized Tate Jarrett in the lead. There were a dozen followers with him; a rough-looking crew, bearded and slovenly dressed, and fully armed.

Loganberry said softly: "That, my friend, is the Murrell gang—the meanest, toughest bunch of murderers on the Mississippi. They're here to make sure that Crockett isn't elected."

Chapter Six

KIMLOCKE WATCHED JARRETT COME INTO THE meadow; he was impressed once again by the man's size and the full power of evil that he represented.

"Crockett's sworn to drive the Murrell gang out of the State or put them all in prison, if he's reelected," Loganberry said. "You can bet they won't ever let him go back to Washington."

Jarrett said something over his shoulder to his companions, and they split, dropping off into the crowd. Jarrett kept on, his head turning right and left as though in search of someone. When his gaze fell full on Kimlocke, he stopped. His brutish face didn't change expression. He stood still a moment; then as if satisfied with what he'd found, he turned and walked slowly away.

"Gentle soul," Loganberry murmured. "I wouldn't want to have any trouble with him."

Kimlocke said shortly: "I already have."

"Then, brother, watch out for yourself."

Loganberry's hand lingered on Kimlocke's shoulder a moment before he turned away. Kimlocke watched him disappear into the crowd, and a faint smile came to his lips. Loganberry was right about Jarrett, but Beau didn't quite share his new friend's apprehensions. Men of Jarrett's caliber had one weakness in common: They were big, brutal, savage and—dull-witted. Jarrett was as dangerous as a grizzly bear, but his menace was limited to the physical, and that was something that could be brought out into the open and dealt with.

Kimlocke returned to his wagon, and sitting on the tail-board, wrote his father a detailed report of the first meeting between Crockett and Clay Abbott, and the incident of the guinea-fowl, which he knew would make a good story for the newspaper. He was just finishing when he saw Garth coming toward him across the meadow.

He watched the big man approach, and his muscles contracted the way they had when he had watched the Murrell gang come into the settlement a few moments ago. Garth stopped by the wagon.

"I didn't think much of your handbill, Kimlocke."

Kimlocke met his gaze. "The truth always hurts."

Garth studied him for a moment. "So you're going to take an active part in this election?"

Kimlocke nodded.

Again Garth studied him in silence; then he said, "I just wanted to be sure."

"You can be sure," Kimlocke said. "Your speech today will make good copy for the *Standard*. And you can expect more handbills."

"I don't like that kind of thing," Garth said. He looked past Kimlocke into the printing wagon, and he glanced at Cootes lying asleep under a tree nearby. Then he turned on his heel and walked away.

Kimlocke stared after him, unsmiling. Garth was a man who had all the savage, brutal qualities of a Jarrett, hidden to the casual eye by a smooth and polished veneer. But unlike Jarrett, he had the brains to make him clever and cunning, and consequently doubly dangerous.

Beau walked over to the mill a few minutes later and gave his letter to the miller who operated the mails to all parts of Tennessee.

"It'll go out in the morning." The miller peered at Kimlocke over the rims of his glasses. "Your letter should be in Memphis in two days."

Long shadows were fingering out of the forest when Kimlocke returned to the wagon; it grew dark, and Simon Cootes built a fire and they cooked their supper of deer steaks and journeycakes. Other fires were springing up around the outer circle of the meadow, and around each men and women and children moved, eating their suppers; here and there men fed their horses and one or two had hitched up, ready to leave before the dancing started. Later a huge fire was built that lighted up the whole meadow with a flickering orange glow, and gradually the settlers in their homespun and gingham began to gather again, the onlookers sitting on the grass in a big circle around the dancers.

Kimlocke walked through the crowd as an old man in his shirtsleeves began counting off the dancers, and two other men with fiddles tuned up on the sidelines. He felt a hand touch his arm, and turning found Loganberry and Trixy Gaudet beside him. "Let's dance," Trixy suggested.

She took his hand and led him out into the meadow before he could say no. "I know you do." She was walking on her toes, one hand holding out her dress, and she was smiling happily. "I like to dance."

"And sing. You have a nice voice."

Her grip on his hand tightened as the music started up. Kimlocke watched the big circle swing into motion, and he watched Trixy's feet and had no difficulty in following her. There was little uniformity in the way the settlers danced. Some danced wildly, their whole bodies twisting, while others merely shuffled their feet. But it struck Kimlocke that they all were smiling; and he knew this, as much as anything, was what had brought them into the settlement—to have a little fun, to sing, and to dance, and to drink. It happened only once or twice a year to relieve the monotony and the loneliness of their forest lives.

"You're doing fine." Trixy had drawn closer to him, until he could feel the softness of her. "It's fun, isn't it?"

Kimlocke said, "Yes," and smiled.

And when he looked up again, he saw Aurelia Devlin standing between her uncle and Garth on the fringe of the crowd. She was looking directly at him as though she'd been watching him.

"Friend of yours?" Trixy's voice had chilled; her eyes had lost some of their sparkle.

"Hardly," Kimlocke said.

"How long have you known her?"

"A week or two."

Trixy drew away from him slightly. "How well?"

"Just casually."

She wasn't smiling any longer. "Miss Devlin belongs to Garth."

"Miss Devlin doesn't belong to anyone," Kimlocke contradicted, "until she's married."

"She'll marry Garth."

"Perhaps." He added, "And perhaps not."

The music stopped just then; he took Trixy's arm and they returned in silence to where Loganberry was waiting for them.

"This next is mine," the Doctor said, "and I hope I can do as good a job at this dancing business as our friend Kimlocke."

"You don't have to know how to dance when you're with Trixy," Kimlocke said. "She'll inspire you."

He excused himself and started around the circle toward Aurelia Devlin. He could feel Trixy's eyes following him, and all at once he was aware of the interest—it was more than just a friendly interest, he realized uncomfortably—that she'd shown in him. He came up to Aurelia from behind. When he stepped in front of her, she drew back a step, startled.

Garth greeted him with a frown of annoyance and said to Abbott: "I don't think you've met Mr. Kimlocke."

Kimlocke held out his hand, and Abbott took it limply. He was a man of Scott Kimlocke's age but had none of the elder Kimlocke's vitality and boundless energy. His face was sallow and his shoulders stooped, as though tired of life. His clothes were well-made, but grown shabby in spots.

"I hope you're not angry with me," Kimlocke said to Aurelia.

A smile broke through her reserve. "I noticed that the *Standard* has softened its attack against my uncle. I'm grateful."

Kimlocke looked out across the meadow, and he had to raise his voice above the din of music and voices. "Would you like to dance?" And when she shook her head he suggested: "Or find a spot that's a little quieter?"

She hesitated; then put her hand through his arm. Garth and her uncle didn't try to stop her, in spite of their obvious annoyance; and they walked away from the crowd and the firelight, walked past some wagons and a mother sitting on the ground nursing a baby, and two other children asleep under the wagon, wrapped in blankets. The dew was falling and the grass underfoot was wet; Aurelia lifted her skirts with her free hand, just enough to keep them from trailing the ground but not enough to show more than her ankle and the tops of her high button shoes. She was wearing a light blue dress, and across her shoulders she wore a silk cloak that was tied under her chin, with the long tassels hanging down in front. Her head was bare, her hair done in those coiled braids he liked so much.

They walked toward the gristmill, where a light burned in the living-quarters, and they walked past it and past the quiet millpond along the brook, until finally Aurelia stopped and said: "Isn't this far enough?"

They were standing under a tall pine tree, and she put her back to it and looked up at him with a shaft of yellow moonlight streaming full across her face. From here they could look through the trees and see the meadow with all its people, and the white tops of the wagons, and the steady stream of men climbing the slight incline to the shack that had been turned into a temporary tavern. And they could hear the sound of the music, and the low sighing of the wind through the pine needles over their heads.

The moonlight touched her eyes and lips with silver; and her voice, her very nearness, stirred him as no other girl ever had. The full realization of that startled—and annoyed—him.

"Your friend Crockett is a strange sort of person to be a politician," she said.

"He has his good qualities."

"My uncle has good qualities too."

"I don't doubt that."

"Most anti-Jackson men have difficulty seeing good in others," she stated. "That's their greatest weakness. They beat their drums so loudly against their opponents that they fail to hear when they have begun to sound hollow."

"There must be reasons behind their criticisms."

"Of course." Aurelia's voice was confident. "They do it simply to cover up for lack of anything constructive to say for their own cause. That's always the way."

Kimlocke looked down into her face and saw that she was in earnest, and he remembered now having heard that both she and her uncle were rabid Jackson supporters. He said softly: "Don't you think that moon up there will become annoyed if we continue this talk of politics?"

She glanced over her shoulder, then moved a little around the tree trunk into shadow. "If Crockett wins the election and you keep your newspaper, do you intend to stay in Memphis?"

Kimlocke shook his head. "I'm leaving just as soon as it's over."

"Isn't that open to some doubt?"

"In what way, exactly?"

"Your father," she answered. "I understand he's determined to keep you at home with him."

Kimlocke frowned. "And just where do you get your information?"

"A town like Memphis is full of gossip."

He was silent a moment; then he asked curiously: "What more have you heard about me?"

"Well," she said, and she spoke with evident relish, "I have heard that you ran away when you were eighteen, that you gave up everything—your home, education, the promise of a career—to become a roustabout on a river packet, and after a year or two of that, to become a lumberman, a rafter, a railroader, an adventurer, a gambler, and a—a woman-hater—"

She stopped from shortness of breath, and Kimlocke laughed aloud.

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" she cried.

"It's greatly exaggerated," he assured her. "From first to last—especially the last."

There was amused contempt in her voice. "They say you run from every woman you meet because you're afraid you'll lose your liberty."

It was his turn to be silent.

"You don't deny it?"

"No," he answered. "I'm afraid of women; afraid, just as you say, that they'll try to keep me from doing what I want to do," he added solemnly. "I'm even a little bit suspicious of you—"

Her voice interrupted him coldly: "Now you're being ridiculous. No two people could be less suited to each other, could possibly have such different tastes and interests."

"I didn't mean it quite that way," he began, and stopped. She'd stepped away from the tree, deliberately turning her head away, but not before he had seen the color come into her cheeks.

"I'm sure the West is where you belong," she said stiffly. "And now, if you don't mind, I think we should be getting back. My uncle and Mr. Garth will be wondering what's happened."

Mention of Garth's name set a little prickle of irritation down Kimlocke's spine; but when she started down the path, he followed. "The Western Territory needs women as well as men to help explore its frontiers," he said to her back. "It needs strong women with a faith in someone to carry them through whatever danger they might meet up with. As far as I've been able to discover, that kind of a woman is a rare specimen."

"Everyone to their own tastes," she flung at him over her shoulder. "For myself, I'd rather be dead than ever have to set foot west of the Mississippi."

They passed the mill and walked through the outer circle of wagons until they came to the meadow. The dancing had stopped, and now Crockett was seated on the tree stump, telling the settlers who had gathered around him something that had brought smiles to nearly every face.

Kimlocke followed Aurelia across the meadow to where Garth and her uncle were standing.

"I had a little trouble getting up to Washington last term," Crockett was saying in a voice loud enough for all the settlers gathered about him to hear. "I was hunting down along the Obion and followed a bear for six days and six nights before I could catch up with him. When I did we fought with our bare hands and I finished him off in thirty minutes even." He paused and looked around at the settlers solemnly. "Then I put him on my back and carried him home, and by the time I'd done that, the exercise made me so hungry I sat right down and ate him, all six hundred pounds, and it took quite a while, and that's what made me late getting started for Washington."

Kimlocke glanced at Aurelia, and saw she didn't quite know what to make of Crockett's words.

"So I hopped up onto the sun, expecting a quick ride," Crockett continued, "and what do you think happened?"

"You fell off," someone in the crowd said.

Crockett shook his head. "I forgot the sun was going west and I wanted to go east. I went all around the world, over China and India and Europe and the next morning stepped off in Washington. I was later than I wanted to be, but was in plenty of time for the opening."

A shout of laughter rose from the crowd. Then a harsh voice said, "Too bad you weren't cooked instead," and the laughter checked, and slowly died. Some of the settlers turned around and looked at the owner of the voice. Kimlocke grew tense when he recognized the man as one of those who had come into the settlement with Tate Jarrett that afternoon.

And then Jarrett himself spoke up from the center of the crowd. "You, Crockett—you think you can win the election by telling stories?"

The first heckler shouted: "He hasn't anything else to talk about."

Crockett turned his head and looked at the speaker. "Was it as bad as all that?" he asked good-humoredly.

"I liked it," a settler near Jarrett said. "It's better than listening to Abbott's long-winded speeches."

"Abbott never says anything but what Garth tells him to," another said.

"That's a damn lie," a settler, an Abbott man, shouted, and other Abbott men in the crowd moved forward with a murmur of protest.

"Sure it's a lie," Jarrett encouraged them, "but so is everything that Crockett says."

A settler sprang at the Murrell man. Jarrett knocked him down, but he sprang up and two more joined him, and the two Abbott men stepped up behind Jarrett, and in an instant a fight raged across the meadow. Another fight broke out when the second heckler, without warning, struck at the settler next to him.

Kimlocke said to Aurelia: "There's going to be trouble. You'd better leave."

An angry roar burst from the crowd as the fighting flared and spread. And Jarrett stepped away, grinning.

Chapter Seven

In an instant the meadow was a mass of fighting men. There were men down on the ground fighting, and men on their feet fighting, with fists and clubs. To his surprise, Kimlocke saw Simon Cootes slugging it out toe to toe with a settler half again as big as the little printer. Cootes never had a chance. Even as Kimlocke watched, he went down; and his opponent fell on top of him; two other farmers fell on top of them, and it became a general free-for-all, with Cootes somewhere down near the bottom.

With long strides that broke into a run Kimlocke crossed the meadow. He pushed men aside with his arms and twice he struck out with his fists to clear a path. Someone slashed at him with a wagon spoke, but he ducked, and kept on until he reached the spot where Cootes had disappeared beneath the heap of settlers.

He dragged the top man off and shoved him away into the crowd. The second man was a young, barrel-chested farm boy, and Kimlocke had to hit him twice in the stomach before he would stay down. Two more he pulled off the pile and then he came to Simon Cootes and the giant settler. He seized the big man by his long hair and dragged him off Cootes and halfway to his feet and then hit him once behind the ear, and the big man slid to the ground.

Cootes lay on his back. He looked up and grinned, and Kimlocke saw that two of his front teeth were missing.

"Wish I could fight like you can," said Cootes as he tried to rise. Kimlocke bent and caught him under the arms and raised him to his feet. And Kimlocke said with a smile: "Why don't you stop being a bully and pick on someone your own size."

"I've never been in a fight before," Cootes explained excitedly, "and I like it. I thought I'd be afraid, but I wasn't."

A COMMOTION at one side drew Kimlocke's attention, and he saw the tall coonskin-capped figure of Crockett beating his way through the settlers. When the tall woodsman reached the fire, he stood before it and shouted at the settlers to stop. When they paid him no heed, he reached into the fire, picked up a half-burned stick and hurled it over the heads of the settlers. Sparks streamed down. He snatched another brand from the fire and threw it across the meadow. He threw a third, and it struck a man. The man roared out in pain, and the fighting all over the meadow stopped. Settlers ducked and ran and dodged the sparks that descended on them from Crockett's soaring firebrands.

And suddenly out of the crowd a man sped, the tails of his coat in flames. He sped across the meadow, cursing fiercely, and a second later there came a splash from the millpond. Someone laughed.

"Reminds me of the time I sat on an ant heap," Crockett said dryly, and the laughter became general as the settlers milled about uncertainly, dropped their clubs and unclenched their fists slowly.

"It's all over," Crockett added in a voice loud enough to be heard across the meadow. "It should never have started in the first place. Dirty politics have never been a part of my canvasses."

Two men lay wounded; one with a broken arm, the other with an ugly knife wound in his back.

"Well," Loganberry's voice said at Kimlocke's elbow. "Now you can see the sort of canvass it's going to be. Those are the tactics the Murrell gang will use."

Kimlocke looked around the meadow. "If that's so," he said soberly, "then we'll have to take off our gloves and fight them in the mud, on their own level."

The medicine man shook his head. "Not Crockett. He'll lose rather than go against his principles."

Trixy came up, and Loganberry moved away to join the crowd in the meadow. "Please be careful." She put a hand on Kimlocke's arm anxiously. "Jarrett'll kill you if you're not on your guard."

Kimlocke was surprised at her intentness. "What makes you so sure of that?"

Her gaze fell from his. "I know Jarrett, that's all. I know how he fights."

"You know Jarrett?"

"I know everyone on the river," she answered evasively.

He regarded her steadily. He had a feeling she was holding something back—that she'd let something slip out unintentionally; but he didn't press her. There were numerous things about Trixy and Dr. Loganberry he didn't understand. This was just another.

She repeated: "Just be careful."

Kimlocke's gaze lifted over her shoulder to Garth and Aurelia Devlin standing by the fire in the center of the meadow. He saw Garth say something, and Aurelia smile and nod, and then they started to move slowly out of the firelight. He watched them go and felt a curious resentment grow, so strong he was hardly aware that Trixy had turned to follow his gaze.

As they left the meadow and the waning light of the fire Aurelia put her arm through Garth's and shivered.

"Cold?"

She shook her head slowly. "I guess it's just the excitement."

Garth said shrewdly: "That Kimlocke's quite a fighter."

She could feel her cheeks grow warm when she thought of Kimlocke. She'd watched him go into the meadow to help his friend, the little printer; and for a few minutes she'd felt an anxiety grow for him that had left her surprised and then angry with herself. She didn't like the road or country with its dark and silent forests, and its rough, brutal people, but she thought it suited Kimlocke admirably. He was a man's man, and he belonged in a man's world.

They followed a stream of people up the path out of the meadow and into the settlement. Sounds of laughter came from the cabins and they passed the blacksmith shop, which was dark and empty. On the steps and porch of the trading-post a crowd had gathered to talk over the evening's events.

Aurelia stopped in front of the cabin where she was staying. A light from inside streamed through the open door and fell across Garth. His bold eyes were appraising her, and he hesitated, as though he wanted to be invited in, but she stood in front of the doorway, looking up at him and said: "Thank you."

FOR answer he took her hand and drew her out of the doorway into the darkness against him. He was a full head taller than she, and he tilted up her chin with a finger until her lips touched his. His kiss was fierce and unrestrained, and his arms about her grew so tight she could scarcely breathe.

He let her go finally, and bent and peered at her in the darkness. "I've been wanting to do that ever since we left Memphis. I want you to marry me, Aurelia. I want you to be Mrs. Oran Garth."

She pressed her back against the cabin wall and stared up at the dark shape of him towering above her. She was startled; though she had seen it coming; and in a way she had prepared herself for it.

"Does it sound so terrible?" Garth said.

"No," she answered slowly. "Not at all."

"If I had to recommend myself to you, there isn't much I could say in my favor," Garth spoke quietly. "I'm a gambler, as you know. Some people say I'm crooked; I say I'm just smarter than they are. You'll hear lots of things against me, if you haven't already; about my politics, about my business dealings. Some are lies; some are true. I'm no angel, and I don't want you thinking I am."

She was surprised at his frankness.

"Marry me, Aurelia, and I'll give you everything you want." His voice rose urgently. "Tennessee is a young State still, but it's growing, and I'm growing with it." His lips twitched humorously. "I'll grow out of being just a gambler, and pretty soon people will forget I ever was one; and then I'll be a respectable citizen. Tennessee will be my State. I have plans for it."

Aurelia clasped her hands in front of her. In her mind she contrasted Garth with Kimlocke; she knew Kimlocke was the type who opened up new frontiers for other people to settle, and for men like Garth to exploit. There was no wish for wealth or power in Kimlocke.

His thirst was for adventure, for new sights and new lands, new frontiers, new people.

Angrily she put Kimlocke from her mind. "Can I give you an answer in the morning?" she said, and felt Garth's hands on her shoulders, pressing them tightly.

"If it's yes," he told her, "we can be married—"

"Not right away," she said hastily.

"Whenever you say."

They heard someone walking toward them through the darkness; and stepping back as Clay Abbott loomed up out of the night, Garth said: "Good night."

He touched her elbow with his hand; then he was gone and she watched him stride off down the street, a tall, almost swaggering figure in his long coat and tall beaver hat. It was a little frightening to think of him as her husband; yet there was a certain charm about him that excused many of his obvious faults.

She turned to her uncle and said: "Won't you come in a minute?" She held the door open for him, but he shook his head.

He said finally, "Did Garth—" and still was hesitant.

She nodded silently.

"He spoke to me about it this afternoon." Clay Abbott looked down at his feet and he asked carefully: "What did you tell him?"

"I said I would give him his answer in the morning. I had to have just a little more time to think."

Abbott's gaze lifted to her face. "Garth will be a big man some day. But don't let that influence you." His sallow face grew stern all at once, and the weak lines about his mouth straightened. "It's your choice, and nobody else's."

Chapter Eight

IT WAS FULL DAYLIGHT WHEN BEAU KIMLOCKE rolled out of his blankets next morning. He stretched and looked across the meadow. Most of the settlers had left during the night, but a few wagons were still parked under the trees. Women were busying themselves about their fires while the men watered their teams at the brook.

Cootes was already up and had a fire going. He dished some journeycakes and pork into a tin plate and handed it to Kimlocke. Both of the little printer's eyes were puffed and discolored, but there was a cockiness in the way he walked and talked that hadn't been there yesterday.

"Where's Crockett?" Kimlocke asked.

Cootes jerked his head back over his shoulder. "Having breakfast with the miller." He sat cross-legged on the grass and began eating. He didn't look up when he added: "I don't suppose you're interested in the opposition."

"That depends—"

"They're gone. Garth, Abbott, and the girl left before daylight."

Kimlocke ate his breakfast slowly, thinking he would have liked to see Aurelia again.

He finished eating, and went to find Crockett. The woodsman was just leaving the miller's cabin, and they walked back to the printing-wagon together.

"I've made out a sort of route"—Crockett held up a piece of paper—"of places I think I should canvass. It pretty well covers the State, so if your interest isn't as strong as it was, now is the time to turn back."

"My interest has taken a big spurt forward, not back," Kimlocke answered.

Crockett slapped him on the back heartily. "Then let's start along, he cried. "Tennessee's a big place, and the days to election time all too few."

Cootes went to hitch up the horses, and within twenty minutes they had left the meadow and struck off into the forest. Crockett rode in the wagonseat with them for a mile or so, then leaped down and strode ahead on foot. He could walk as fast as the team could trot; and he never seemed to grow tired.

They made half a dozen stops that morning at clearings in the forest, and Crockett spoke to each settler and his family, many of whom he knew by their first names. He did the same in the afternoon; and next morning spent two hours in a small settlement discussing politics and crops.

ON the third day of their journey they rode into Sundale, a large farming community halfway up the State and inland from the Mississippi. While Crockett met with the mayor and town big-wigs, Kimlocke passed out handbills and then wrote his father in Memphis an account of Crockett's doings.

He was sitting on the tail-gate of the wagon composing his letter when Cootes walked up with a thin, bald man in tow. "Claims he's got a message for you from Loganberry," Cootes introduced him. "He's a Davy Crockett man."

"Loganberry's at Landsdown," the man said. "Seventy miles from here. Him and Trixy."

"Abbott?"

"There too. And his niece works the printing-press; old Abbott talks."

"What about Garth?"

"That's what Loganberry sent me to tell you." The man spat into the ground. "About Garth and the Murrell gang."

"It won't be anything good," Cootes avowed.

"No," the man agreed. "It's all bad. Garth has started buying votes—"

"I knew it."

"And the Murrell gang is organizing their friends to scare folks into voting for Abbott on election day."

Kimlocke folded his half-finished letter and put it in his pocket.

"What voters' money won't persuade, the Murrell bunch will," Loganberry's messenger went on.

"How many settlements have they visited already?"

"I don't know," the man answered, "but Loganberry said to tell you they're planning to have someone at every polling-place in the State."

Kimlocke slid off the tail-gate. "That means Crockett'll have to match them man for man."

"It'll take two ordinary men to make one of the Murrell bunch," Cootes said.

Kimlocke shook hands with the messenger. "When you see Loganberry, thank him for us."

The man hesitated. "I have another message for you. It's from Trixy Gaudet. She said to tell you to watch out for Tate Jarrett. She says Jarrett holds a grudge against you."

Kimlocke laughed. "Twenty thousand dollars and a punch-in-the-stomach's worth."

"Trixy said you'd take it lightly," the man remarked seriously, "but she said to tell you to be careful. She also said to tell you, in case you hadn't heard, that Miss Devlin has become betrothed to Oran Garth."

Both the messenger and Simon Cootes were looking at Kimlocke, and he tried not to let his surprise show. "No, I didn't know," he said slowly. "That's very interesting."

"And she said to tell that she was looking forward to her next meeting with you."

Having delivered his messages, the man nodded briefly to Cootes and walked off. Kimlocke watched him go and didn't know whether to laugh or swear. He hadn't thought Aurelia Devlin would go to the extreme of

marrying Oran Garth. He'd thought she had more spunk.

When Kimlocke thought of Trixy, he frowned. Subtlety certainly was not Trixy's forte; but at least her emotions were completely honest. A man could do worse for a companion.

Leaving Cootes with the printing-wagon, he went to look for Crockett. He found the tall woodsman talking to a group of constituents before the blacksmith shop and drew him aside to tell him of Loganberry's message.

"I was expecting something of the sort," Crockett said calmly.

"We'll have to organize a counter-force to block them at the polls."

"A police force," Crockett agreed, "of responsible citizens to maintain law and order."

"To beat hell out of Jarrett and his bunch, you mean."

"That's not what I mean," Crockett replied emphatically.

"You'll have to keep Jarrett's men away from the polling-places, or they'll steal the election right out from under your nose."

"No." Crockett didn't lose any of his calm, nor his determination. "The election officials in each precinct will put in extra police to make sure the election is conducted in proper order."

Kimlocke felt anger, and dismay; but he held them back.

"I'll handle it from here." Crockett put a hand on his shoulder gratefully. "I appreciate your concern, but it may be groundless. After all, we're living in a civilized age, and no single group of men can completely take over the political machinery of the State."

Kimlocke liked Crockett, admired him; but he wondered how anyone who had been in politics so long, could be so naïve in certain matters. "They have both the money and the manpower," he warned.

He walked back through the settlement to their camping ground at the edge of the forest; and in a few words told Cootes of his conversation with Crockett. "If Crockett loses, we lose the *Standard*." Kimlocke's anger rose. "My father loses ten years of hard work, and everything he has in the world. It took that to build the *Standard* back after Garth burned it down."

"Crockett won't change."

"I know it." Kimlocke was thoughtful. He said abruptly: "So let him be bull-headed. Let him campaign the way he wants. We'll form our own opposition."

"I'll help," the little printer replied eagerly.

"Hitch up the wagon then and we'll go back to the last farmhouse we stopped at. That farmer was a friend of Crockett's, and he had three sons who looked as though they could take care of themselves."

It took the remainder of the morning to find the farmer in his fields and explain the circumstances. The man was willing to help, his sons eager. All four were big men.

"Hunt out the Murrell men, or whoever they've hired, and run them out of town," Kimlocke directed, "And give them a good sound beating, so they don't come back."

Kimlocke felt somewhat better when he rode back to the settlement. Crockett could campaign as he saw fit, but he and Cootes would take stronger measures. Someone had to, or the election would become a rout.

The following day they passed through two more settlements, and while Crockett made speeches, Kimlocke quietly organized similar groups, townsmen in one, farmers in the other. "Beat the hell out of the Murrell gang," became his password.

"For one thing, I hate politics," she said fiercely.

Altogether they organized eleven such groups in the next few days. In ten out of the eleven they chose Crockett supporters, the most loyal they could find. The twelfth town was either predominantly Abbott, or still undecided, and Kimlocke promised money to two half-drunken townees he found in a tavern.

"For a gallon of whisky they'd thrash their own mothers," Cootes remarked.

It was late next afternoon when they rode into the biggest settlement they had yet visited. It was sprawled out at the foot of a low range of hills, a town of three thousand or so population. They drove down the main thoroughfare and stopped at the livery-stable for a bag of feed, while Crockett continued on toward the square and the town hall.

Cootes followed the livery-man into the stable, but he was back in less than a minute. "They're here," he said excitedly. "Their printing-wagon's here, and she—that girl—is there, setting type."

Kimlocke stepped down from the wagon slowly. Sooner or later he'd known they would meet again, but now that moment was at hand, he wondered what there was to say.

He walked through the stable to the corral in back. Aurelia was standing by her wagon drawn up under a large maple tree at one side, setting type from a case open on the tail-gate before her. She didn't smile, or give any sign of welcome.

He watched her a moment in silence and saw she was as expert at her job as Cootes. He said finally: "Congratulations."

She looked at him, at that. "Thank you."

"Garth can doubtless give you what you want."

"I'm quite sure he can."

They'd gone right into the subject of her betrothal, each knowing what the other was talking about. Kimlocke felt the hostility, if that was what it was, that had grown between them.

"I wish you the best of luck," he continued, "because you're going to need it."

"You're impertinent," she shot back at him, "—and rude—"

"You're right," he agreed, "on every account."

She was silent.

"It's just that I had you sized up differently, and was disappointed."

He'd said too much. The open palm of her hand slapped him across the mouth. Her voice was a second blow. "I'll ask you please to leave me alone. Now, and in the future."

She'd connected solidly, and Kimlocke could feel the bruise along the inside of his lip. He laughed quietly. "You swing a mean wallop."

She regarded him stonily. "Don't you ever take anything seriously?"

"Only the trivial things," he replied.

She put down her type-stick and turned away. He caught a glimpse of her face and the anger in her eyes; then she entered the stable, and he was left alone by the corral.

Cootes was waiting for him in the wagon. There was a look of amusement on the little printer's face when he commented dryly, "The course of true love runs up-and downhill—mostly down."

Kimlocke climbed up onto the seat beside him. Cootes picked up the reins and drove to the camping grounds on the outskirts of the settlement. Kimlocke helped water and feed the horses and they ate supper. Then they walked back into the town.

A crowd was gathered in front of one of the taverns on the steps of which Crockett stood, talking. He was delivering a speech on tariffs, and having heard it several times before, Kimlocke walked by without stopping. In the hotel down the street he found a small group of Crockett supporters—business men and shopkeepers, mostly.

He told them of the Murrell gang's plans for election day and explained the need for organized resistance.

"You can count on us to the hilt," one said.

"You'll have to use plenty of force," Kimlocke urged. "If they have five men at the polls; you have twenty-five. There'll be less trouble and less risk that way."

"Let's go across the street and have a drink on it," another suggested. "We can talk some more about it there."

The tavern they selected was crowded and noisy. With the two candidates in town, a Saturday-night spirit was in the air. Political talk rose on every side, some pro Crockett, the rest pro Abbott. Kimlocke stood at the bar, and in the next half hour enlisted supporters of his counter-measures.

"What if Crockett hears about this?" Cootes asked.

Kimlocke looked into his glass thoughtfully. There'd be an argument, of course, and he wanted to avoid that.

Cootes had had three stiff drinks, and Kimlocke had to steady him when they left the tavern and their friends an hour later. A horse and wagon passed them in the darkness, and they turned up the street after it. Cootes was in an argumentative mood. He wasn't ready to leave the tavern yet, wanted to stay and have another drink.

THEY'D gone less than a hundred feet when Kimlocke became aware of someone following them. It was a sound at first; then glancing around, he saw the three black shapes moving toward them. They leaped forward, and he had just time to give Cootes a hard shove before they were on him.

He lashed out at the nearest and connected with a hard body. Off in the darkness a fist met flesh, and he heard Cootes go down with a strangled cry. Then all three of his attackers were on him, and their sheer weight and size crushed him to the ground. The attack was swift, unexpected. He didn't even have a chance to yell.

Now a man lay across each of his arms. They left his legs free to thrash about; but the upper part of his body was nailed effectively to the ground. The third man knelt at his head. He brought one fist, then the other, smashing down on Kimlocke's unprotected face. Kimlocke fought back furiously. He tried to wrench his arms free, kick off his assailants, but he was helpless in their grasp.

The blows continued, like axes crushing his skull. He tasted blood, felt it running warm down his neck. A huge fist almost tore the top of his head off. The second nearly snapped his jaw. After the seventh or eighth such blow consciousness faded. . . .

He came to with a light shining in his eyes. He lay still, staring at it, trying to think, to feel. There was a numbness in every bone, every muscle. He had difficulty seeing.

It had been the Murrell gang; he felt sure of that. They'd given him the beating he'd been organizing for them. . . . He became aware of a voice speaking somewhere beyond the light shining in his eyes. "They were lying here in the street, the two of them. Thrown out of some tavern."

The lantern rose into the air, and Kimlocke made out Davy Crockett standing tall and straight above him. But the voice had come from beyond Crockett and now Kimlocke saw Oran Garth on the plank walk. Standing just back of him were Abbott, and Aurelia Devlin.

A SECOND voice came from the darkness to Kimlocke's right. "The little fellow's throwing up whisky. Drunk as a coot."

"They're both drunk," Garth sneered. "Nice friends you have, friend Crockett. Drinking and brawling—certainly not helping your cause any."

Kimlocke tried to rise, but to move was like pushing knives into his chest and stomach and ribs. Not satisfied with using their fists, the Murrell men had kicked his sides half in as well. It hurt to draw a breath.

"I wouldn't be too quick to condemn," Crockett said quietly. "Kimlocke's taken a bad beating, and drunk or sober, I don't believe any man could have done it to him alone."

"So it took ten men," Garth retorted. "Tavern brawls usually involve more than one person."

"We would have heard it," Crockett said firmly.

There was a murmur of voices from the darkness, and for the first time, Kimlocke realized there was a crowd around him.

"What do you think happened, then?" Garth's voice was patronizing.

"I have an idea," Crockett replied, "but I wouldn't want to say until I've had a chance to talk to Kimlocke."

Garth laughed nastily. "That will prove disappointing, I'll guarantee."

Kimlocke closed his eyes. When he opened them again, he sought out Aurelia Devlin. She was still standing between her uncle and Garth, and now there was disgust and contempt on her face. She looked away.

Crockett said something to some men standing nearby, and Kimlocke felt himself picked up and carried into a building across the street. They laid him on the floor; and a third man, a doctor evidently, knelt beside him.

"Four teeth missing." The doctor checked off his injuries in a flat, bored tone. "Fracture of the nose. Two black eyes. Multiple abrasions." His hands probed Kimlocke's chest and sides. "And I'd say at least three ribs broken. They did a rather thorough job of it."

"Very thorough." Crockett stood just back of the doctor, tall and stern as a presiding judge. "What happened, Beau? Who was it?"

Kimlocke tried to sit up. It hurt to move, and he wondered if all of his ribs, instead of just two, could be broken.

"Was it the Murrell gang?" Crockett asked. "Was this their answer to your efforts to organize an opposition to them at the polls?"

With the doctor's help, Kimlocke drew himself up onto a bench. He looked around. He was in a shop of some sort, and the two men who had carried him in off the street were just pushing through the doorway with Cootes in their arms. They stretched the little printer out on a blanket on the floor.

"Drunk," one grinned, "and sick as a poisoned dog."

Kimlocke looked at Crockett. "You heard about it?"

The woodsman nodded. "Just this evening."

Kimlocke didn't say anything.

"What you're doing will almost surely cause riots at every polling-place in the State." Crockett's voice was angry. "Rioting, stealing, brawling—those are Garth's ways of doing things, but not mine."

Still Kimlocke didn't say anything.

"It's got to stop," Crockett said. "Do you understand? There's to be no more of it in this campaign."

Kimlocke swayed forward on his chair. He felt dizzy again, and the room began to spin crazily. He felt both the doctor and Crockett catch him as he fell. He felt them roll him over onto his back; and his last conscious thought was that at least this was easier than having to tell Crockett to go to hell.

Chapter Nine

KIMLOCKE LEANED BACK WITH HIS ELBOW ON the seat-back as they jogged slowly through the forest. Ahead of them three or four lengths rode Crockett, his tall figure straight in the saddle. They had ridden far this way, by wagon and horseback, had covered ten counties in fourteen days of canvassing.

He shifted uncomfortably on the swaying wagon-seat. The blackness had left his eyes, and his mouth and ribs had healed fairly well. What remained to plague him was the memory of those three men thrashing him. He'd tried repeatedly to find out who they were, so he could pay them back; but he'd been unsuccessful.

They came onto a grassy plain and saw the Mississippi a mile away stretching north and south like a great long lake, wide and black and sluggish. Kimlocke studied a group of log cabins and rough-board shacks on the near bank, knew them to be Taylor's Landing. It was a bustling riverboat and logging town, he remembered, having passed on the way down to Memphis a few weeks before. It was the only big town between Memphis and Cairo, and it was the most important politically. Here three-quarters of a county, the most doubtful county in the State, would vote in three days. Here he would have his biggest job of organizing.

Contrary to Crockett's demands, he had continued to organize an opposition in every settlement they had visited. Now they rode for Taylor's Landing, following the road that approached it from the east and ran straight through it to the river's edge. A quarter mile out from the first row of buildings a rutted lane branched off and ran to the river, and he saw some logging carts and a crew of men working on the levee.

They drew abreast of the first building and rode down what a freshly-painted sign proclaimed to be River Street. This street was thirty feet broad and dusty and both sides were lined with rigs and saddle-horses; there seemed to be an unusual number of people on the plank walks and porches and in doorways. Someone recognized the printing-wagon and the buckskin-clad figure in the lead and shouted: "Here comes Crockett!"

Crockett rode up the middle of the street, and Cootes followed with the team. They passed some warehouses and the livery-stable next to the smithy, where three horses stood waiting to be shod. The smith came out in his leather apron and stood watching them, and he made a sign of welcome with his right hand in which he held a big hammer.

From Buck's Tavern halfway down the street came sounds of laughter. Kimlocke watched the crowd of men moving along the street and standing in doorways, and he saw that not very many of them were settlers. A few were well-dressed with the striped trousers, coat and cravat of the city. The other were riverboat men, loggers, toughs. There were all kinds in the town, men in coonskin and men in homespun. There were trappers in deerhide and fur hats slouching down the street, rough-bearded loggers in their big boots, and a few Indians.

They turned the corner by the Cotton Belle Tavern and rode south along the levee, which was also called Front Street. A small steamer, the *Mary Lou*, was tied up at the landing, nose into the bank, and a crew of Negroes were unloading stores aft while a second gang worked at unloading cotton from the forward deck. Smoke floated lazily up from each of the boat's tall stacks.

They had passed the Cotton Belle when he saw Jarrett standing by the corner of the building, watching, his flat, brutish face expressionless. The big man was wearing a new silk hat, but the same muddy shoes and the same clothes, the ruffled shirt and long-tailed coat that looked so incongruous on his rough frame.

"Where's the rest of his gang?" Cootes asked.

Kimlocke smiled. "Isn't one enough for you?"

In the two weeks of campaigning since the night the Murrell gang had jumped them, Crockett had taught Cootes how to shoot a rifle, and Kimlocke had showed him how to use his fists, and the little man's confidence in himself had multiplied until he had grown almost cocky.

Crockett led the way past a row of warehouses and some big freighters loading with supplies to a small park on the levee south of the last of the building. Black circles of old campfires pockmarked the greenness of the grass, and Doctor Loganberry's houselike wagon was drawn up at one end of the park.

Kimlocke looked around at the crowd of men following them along the levee. There was a holiday spirit about all these people that he couldn't understand. Cootes brought the wagon to a stop and as Kimlocke jumped down, Trixy ran up and threw her arms about him. He held her awkwardly with his hands on her waist, and she threw back her head and laughed when she said: "I thought you'd never get here."

DOCTOR LOGANBERRY strolled up. "Greetings," he beamed. "Dear friends, it's good to see you again."

"Where did all the people come from?" Crockett turned surprised eyes on the crowd that was pouring into the park. "There's McBride from Piney Knob, and the Quelches clear from the other side of the Obion. What're they doing here?"

"They came for tomorrow's debate between you and Abbott," Loganberry said. "It's caused a lot of interest and excitement."

Crockett said quietly: "A debate?"

"Didn't you accept Abbott's challenge?" Loganberry asked, suddenly suspicious.

"No," Kimlocke and Crockett replied in the same breath. Kimlocke added: "We weren't scheduled to arrive here until the day after tomorrow but we changed our plans at the last minute."

Loganberry pursed his lips in a low whistle. "That's some more of Garth's work for you." He drew a copy of the *Standard* from his pocket. "And look here. This is the latest, but I've got a dozen different issues over in my wagon, and there's not a word in any of them about Crockett's tour through the settlements."

Kimlocke looked through the paper carefully. "I sent in six reports."

"You sent them in, but did your father receive them?"

Their glances met questioningly. These were little things, but they plainly showed the trend of Garth's activities. They were the cause of the apprehension that, bit by bit, had been growing stronger in Kimlocke.

The crowd had gathered around them and Crockett turned to Loganberry. "What's going to be the subject of this debate?"

"The tariff!" Trixy spoke up quickly.

Crockett looked relieved. "I've spoken a hundred times on that subject. One more won't hurt."

He winked at Cootes and walked off into the crowd. He shook hands right and left with friends, and he steered them to some shade and stood under a tree with his back to the trunk and both arms folded around the barrel of his rifle. The crowd, some two-score strong, made a semi-circle around him. He said something, and the settlers laughed; and more came into the park and hurried to join their friends under the trees. Cootes had already turned his team around and driven back uptown for some grain and provisions.

"Whenever a crowd begins to gather, I am like a hound dog that's caught the scent." Doctor Loganberry took off his stove-pipe hat and brushed it carefully on his sleeve, then set it back on his head at a jaunty angle. "Thirty per cent sales is a good average. Thirty per cent of a hundred people is thirty bottles. At fifty cents apiece and eighty per cent profit, that should put—let me see—twelve silver dollars in the poke." He touched one finger to Trixy's shoulder. "Don't bother, my dear. The music would only disturb friend Crockett. I can handle this one alone."

He stalked off in the direction of his medicine wagon; and a minute later was back under the trees with a basketful of bottles.

"Sometimes I think if I see another bottle of his Famous Remedy, I'll be ready to leave for Texas," Trixy said. "Or California."

Kimlocke chose his words with care. "The Doctor is a good man."

She stood by his shoulder, so close he could hear her gentle breathing. "I know that."

"And he loves you."

"I know that too, but Loganberry's older than I am. He's thinking of retiring, or buying a farm. I'm restless, like you."

"A woman can't roam," Kimlocke said. "She can't just get up and go to Texas, or California."

"She can if she's with a man."

KIMLOCKE turned his head and looked down at this girl at his side. Trixy was young and pretty and vivacious. She could, he thought, make both an interesting companion and a good wife. He said: "Let's go listen to what Crockett has to say. You haven't heard him speak lately."

Trixy shook her head impatiently. "Politics is something else I'm tired of. If you want to listen, don't let me stop you."

Kimlocke ignored the hurt in her voice, and taking her arm drew her toward the crowd under the trees. The conversation had grown a little too personal for comfort. There would be time to make plans after the election.

"For the edification and guidance of any beginner politicians who might be present, I have been asked to explain some of my most successful methods of canvassing," Crockett was saying as they stopped on the fringe of the crowd. "Some years ago I devised a method to which I attribute much of the success I managed in those days to enjoy." A smile twitched the corner of his mouth. "I made a buckskin hunting-shirt with a pocket in either side large enough to hold a bushel. In one I put a gallon of whisky; in the other, a twist of tobacco the size of a tree stump."

"We could do with a bit of that whisky now, Davy," someone in the crowd shouted.

Crockett waved a hand in the air. "It's too bad, but I gave the shirt to Andy Jackson a few years ago when he and I were friends; and it was so successful in getting him into the White House that he hasn't returned it yet."

The crowd laughed and Crockett shifted his weight to his other foot.

"Here's a general policy to follow in canvassing," he said as the laughter died. "Talk—that's all you have to do. Get up early in the morning and talk. Talk in the afternoon, talk all night. Talk about yourself, about your modesty and your accomplishments, about your family and your relatives. Complain against the weather and taxes and other politicians. Promise everything that is asked, and then some more. Promise to build a town, divide a county, establish a school, a church. Promise the farmer higher prices, the consumer lower prices. Play up to the women, for in many homes they control the votes. Kiss their children, and their dogs and their cats."

Crockett looked over at Kimlocke and said directly to him: "That's all there is to it. Once you're elected, why, the devil with the promises and the dogs and the cats and the children. To be a real honest-to-goodness politician, you've got to forget all those things the minute the ballots are counted."

"That's the way, Davy," rose from the crowd. "Now what about a drink? They've got plenty of it uptown."

"That's something I forgot to mention," Crockett sighed. "Carry a little money with you, for it is almost certain that your constituents will be bone dry at all times."

LOGANBERRY stepped over by Kimlocke. "There's fifty good votes here."

"Perhaps," Kimlocke agreed. "If Garth doesn't manage to steal them."

"He'll try his damnedest—"

A loud explosion cut Loganberry's sentence short. It shook the ground under their feet, stopped Crockett and the crowd in their tracks. For a minute they stood still, looking at each other; and then they all heard it—angry shouts and the sound of hoofbeats coming from the direction of the town.

And then they saw it. Kimlocke recognized the horses when they burst between two buildings and raced across the clearing for the woods. They were running wild, dragging the broken wagon behind them. The rear wheels were gone and the canvas flapped in shreds, and the wagon-bottom dragged the ground, spilling parts of the printing-press onto the ground.

The horses raced across the park and entered the forest beyond. There was a splintering crash as they vanished from sight in the underbrush, then a horse's scream, and another crash.

Kimlocke started to run then; Loganberry ran at his heels, and behind the medicine-man came Crockett and half the crowd. The other half, at the woodsman's shouted command, raced into the forest after the horses. Kimlocke ran along the levee and at the corner turned up River Street. People were appearing out of buildings on every side, hurrying down the street toward a dense crowd that already choked the mouth of the alley between Avery's saddle-shop and Cole's feed-store.

Kimlocke cleared a path through the crowd, struck out with his elbows when men wouldn't give way and so came to a small cleared space halfway up the alley. Cootes lay in a litter of wreckage that was the other half of the wagon. For a shocked second Kimlocke stared down at him. One side of the little printer's face was scorched black, and a thin trickle of blood was running out of each of his ears.

Loganberry dropped down beside Cootes and felt the banty man's pulse. "He's still ticking."

"Let's get him out of here." Kimlocke's voice was urgent.

Loganberry raised Cootes, another man lifted him by the feet, and they carried him out through the crowd. "We'll take him to the hotel," Loganberry said over his shoulder. Some in the crowd followed. Others remained in the alley.

"What happened?" Crockett asked. "Did anyone see?"

A man in his shirt sleeves stepped forward. "Your friend came into my store asking for a sack of grain. I gave him a hundred pounds. He couldn't lift it, and he wouldn't let me carry it out for him, so I put it on his back, and he took it out by himself. A minute later I heard the explosion."

"I heard the explosion and saw the team come out of the alley," a riverman said.

"I saw smoke and a sheet of flame," another said.

"Some gunpowder must have gone off accidentally," the storekeeper suggested.

Kimlocke looked after Cootes and said quietly: "There wasn't any gunpowder in that wagon."

The crowd hushed. It filled the alley to the street, and it filled the street clear across the far sidewalk and in either direction as far as Kimlocke could see. From the crowd beyond the immediate vicinity came a low hum of voices, of questions asked and answered as news of what was happening in the alley spread.

"If you didn't have gunpowder in that wagon—" the storekeeper's voice trailed off into silence.

Men in the crowd looked at each other.

"This wasn't any accident," Kimlocke told them.

He saw the disbelief in nearly every face, and he turned and pushed his way angrily through the crowd. He walked rapidly down the street to Taylor's Hotel on the corner across from the Cotton Belle. Matt Taylor, tall and sparse and soft-spoken, met him at the door to a room on the ground floor. "He's in a bad way, poor fellow."

Kimlocke stepped into the room. The shades were drawn and the room was dimly lighted but he saw Loganberry kneeling beside the bed and he walked near on his toes.

The medicine-man glanced up. "He's got a fighting chance—no more."

Kimlocke stood beside his friend while he worked over the little printer with bandages. Cootes was barely breathing, and Kimlocke felt the nearness of death in the room.

Loganberry stood up at last. "That's the best I can do. God knows it isn't much." He dried his hands on a towel. "I'll stay right here with him."

Kimlocke bent and peered at Cootes, and touched him gently on the shoulder. Then he turned and left the room. He walked through the lobby, past Taylor, who said something he didn't hear, and so stepped out into the bright sunlight of the street.

The first man he saw through squinting eyes was Jarrett, lounging in the doorway of the Cotton Belle. The big man's hands were in his pockets, but when he saw Kimlocke, they came out quickly, and he stepped down out of the doorway with a sudden wariness in his slouch.

Kimlocke was halfway across the street when a hand gripped his arm. He flung it off and took another step, but again the hand gripped his arm and it was like a vise, and now he turned and found Crockett holding him back.

"None of that," the woodsman said sharply. "If Jarrett's guilty, he'll pay the penalty. I've told you before this is a political campaign, not a tavern brawl. You put a finger on Jarrett without proof, and within twenty-four hours it will be all over the district that Crockett, the sanctimonious scoundrel, has taken the law into his own hands. And due process of law is one of the things I've fought for all my political life."

"There's only one way to conduct this canvass and *I've* told you *that* before." Kimlocke spoke savagely. "It's to fight it on their level."

They stood and faced each other, two strong men; and Jarrett watched in the open doorway and waited.

"This is my canvass," Crockett said determinedly.

"My father and I have a stake in it too," Kimlocke reminded him.

"I promise you that Jarrett will not go unpunished."

Kimlocke hesitated, and in that instant they both became aware of Trixy standing on the walk beside them. She was staring at Jarrett, and her voice was tight with emotion when she said: "Garth didn't tell you to hurt Simon Cootes, you dirty butcher."

Jarrett looked hard at her, then stepped down to the plank walk.

"What do you know about Garth?" Crockett asked.

Trixy said evenly: "I know everything there is to know about Garth and Jarrett and their whole rotten bunch."

Jarrett said, "You'd better keep your mouth shut," and moved closer.

Trixy hesitated, and when she finally spoke it was with an effort. "I've known Garth for quite a while." Her glance wavered uncertainly. "He's been paying me to spy on you. I can tell you that Jarrett—"

Jarrett sprang at her. Kimlocke saw it coming and jumped to meet him, but Crockett was faster. The woodsman stepped forward, a pistol jumping into his hand, and he slapped the barrel against Jarrett's head. Jarrett stumbled and clutched at the air for support without going down. He stopped and shook his head.

"Take it easy," Crockett said gently. "I don't want to—" He held his pistol ready for another blow.

Jarrett backed away, his gaze jumping from Trixy to Kimlocke and then to Crockett, and in his eyes there was enough cold hatred to kill them all.

Crockett looked down at Trixy with a puzzled frown. "Why are you telling us this?"

"I don't go for murder," she said simply. She colored. "I've been selling Garth information on the canvass. I needed the money."

"Does Loganberry know?"

Kimlocke saw the alarm spring into her eyes, and he asked: "What were you going to say about Jarrett?"

"Just that it was Garth who told Jarrett to blow up your printing-wagon."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. Garth printed some posters saying Crockett will speak in Shelby on the twentieth. That's tomorrow. When Crockett doesn't show up Garth will speak instead. He's in Shelby now."

Kimlocke saw the surprise in Crockett's glance.

"It'll mean a lot of votes for Abbott," Trixy warned.

Jarrett had stood by, listening, but now he wheeled and sprang across the plank-walk up the steps of the Cotton Belle, and disappeared inside.

Kimlocke looked after him, then turned to Trixy. "I wish you hadn't said all that in front of him."

She bit her lip nervously. "He'd better not touch me."

"Who printed those posters?" Kimlocke asked.

"Garth."

"Aurelia too?"

Her glance came up quickly, and a pout grew on her lips as she admitted grudgingly: "That girl doesn't know anything about it."

Crockett put away his gun with a decisive gesture. "One of us will have to go to Shelby."

"I will," Kimlocke said. "You have your debate here with Abbott."

"Good." Crockett nodded approval. "I'll arrange for a horse and guide." He started away, but turned back. "I think we should consider this entire incident as having never happened," he said to Trixy. "There's no need for Doctor Loganberry to know of your dealings with Garth unless you should want to tell him yourself." He gave her a reassuring smile.

"Makes me feel like a dog for ever working against him," Trixy said quietly as she watched him stride away.

As Kimlocke stepped down off the walk, she caught his arm quickly and fell into step beside him. "What are you going to do?" Her voice was anxious.

"Crockett can canvass as usual with speeches and rallies and free drinks," Kimlocke answered, "but I'm going to continue to fight Garth the other way. I don't intend to lose the *Standard*."

"No, *please!*" Her grip on his arm tightened. "You have to be rotten to fight that way, and you're not. Halfway measures won't do."

"They won't be halfway measures," Kimlocke promised.

Chapter Ten

WHEN TRIXY LEFT KIMLOCKE BY THE COTTON Belle he continued up the street alone and turned in Henry Cole's store. A group of men inside looked up questioningly when he stepped through the doorway. There were five of the men: Henry Cole, Matt Taylor, and three others.

"Matt was telling us your friend's in a bad way," Cole said. He introduced the other three, Dick Avery and two merchants, George Perry and Al Higgens. Avery was a small, thin man. He said: "Who do you think did it?"

"Jarrett," Kimlocke answered. "Under Garth's orders, of course."

"It could have been an accident, you know."

Kimlocke's mouth tightened. "All of you are backing Crockett, aren't you?"

Matt Taylor said in his soft voice: "We are."

"Then organize to help him. He'll lose if you don't."

Avery smiled. "Some of us will be there to keep an eye on things."

"There's got to be enough of you so when the trouble starts, you'll be able to control the polls, not they." Kimlocke wondered how many times in the last month he had had to emphasize that.

"Al and Dick and I and a few others will see that the election's orderly." It was the same complacent reply.

"You'll need fifty men," Kimlocke insisted.

Five hostile pairs of eyes met his, and he thought helplessly: "They're like Crockett. They're asleep." There wasn't anything he could do or say now that would convince them, and he left the feed store and returned up the street to the hotel. He was worried; the vote in Taylor's Landing could easily decide the election; both Garth and the Murrell men knew it, and could be expected to use every trick to win.

Crockett was waiting for him in front of the livery-stable thirty minutes later. A rangy youth of seventeen or so came out of the stable leading two horses, and Crockett said: "This is Billy, a cousin of mine. He knows a shortcut to Shelby."

Kimlocke shook hands with the boy. He was tall, loose-limbed and tanned, and his features bore a strong resemblance to Crockett's. He was carrying a rifle.

Kimlocke mounted, and side by side they rode down the street and out of town. They rode out of Taylor's Landing at a good swift pace and rode east along a well-traveled road across open fields and flat lands. The sun was three-quarters of its way across the blue sky, and it was hot.

They didn't talk much. They rode hard for three hours and then stopped at a settler's cabin for a change of horses. "We'll be back for them in a couple of days, Uncle Ned," Billy told the settler. They rode on, and now they turned off the roadway into the forest, and followed a dim deer trail along a narrow valley between two ridges. The sun went down, and for a while it was twilight, with the clouds pink and purple, then black; now it was night.

THEY moved ahead slowly in the darkness. Then the moon came up and shed a faint light through the branches, and they made faster time. Billy rode in the lead, his attention on the trail; and Kimlocke rode with his thoughts on Cootes.

They rode out of the valley to meet another roadway going east and west, and followed it east for a mile until they came to a settler's cabin. There they left their horses and continued on foot through a swamp where the water was knee-deep and their boots sank into mud, and each step was an effort.

Ten miles farther on they left the swamp and picked up two horses at a settlement where Billy was well-known, and they rode for an hour until they came to a broad river and they swam this. It was growing light in the east when they reached the next settlement. They stopped for a short rest and something to eat, and then with fresh horses they pushed on.

They rode into Shelby, a town about a third the size of Taylor's Landing, with the sun standing high overhead. Kimlocke glanced at the nearly empty street and said quietly: "We're too late. I don't see any sign of a meeting."

Kimlocke dismounted, went into the tavern and found half a dozen men in the taproom. He walked up to the bartender and asked: "Isn't there a political meeting being held here today?"

"There was one scheduled for this morning." The man shrugged. "But Crockett didn't show up."

"What happened?"

"Fellow named Garth spoke for Abbott. He said Crockett never kept his promises."

"Is Garth still in town?"

The man shook his head.

Kimlocke turned to the other men in the room. "Crockett didn't know he was scheduled to speak here today. Garth had those posters printed. That's Garth's way of canvassing."

"Who are you?" the bartender asked.

Kimlocke told him. The man was doubtful, and he read the doubt in the eyes of the other men.

"Davy better come and tell us that himself," one of them said. He added: "Not that anyone doubts your word, stranger; but a lot of folks were disappointed here when he didn't turn up, and a lot of them were mad, and he ought to tell them himself what happened."

"There isn't time before the election," Kimlocke said.

The bartender placed a drink in front of him. "This is an Abbott town right now. If Crockett had been here this morning, it might have been different."

Kimlocke left his drink untouched and went outside. He found Billy looking at a poster tacked to the building next door. "Read that," the boy said.

Kimlocke ran his eye down the sheet and stiffened. It was an announcement of a speech that Crockett would make the next day in Blackville, a small town to the west of Shelby.

"What do we do?" Billy asked helplessly.

"How far is it to Blackville?"

"Fourteen miles."

Kimlocke thought a minute. "Get the horses," he decided, "and we'll try and catch Garth at his game."

They rode out of Shelby ten minutes later and put their horses into a slow jog. At the end of half a mile they raised it to a trot, then broke the pace to a canter. They held that for five miles, then fell back into a fast trot. Two hours after leaving Shelby, they came out of the forest and turned into the settlement.

Blackville was a town of perhaps two hundred population or less; a tavern, some stores and homes, a smithy, a church—one of a hundred similar settlements scattered throughout the State. Like Shelby, it was quiet, the single grass-bordered street all but deserted. Kimlocke swore quietly when they drew rein before the blacksmith shop.

The smith shook his head in answer to their query. "Garth's been, and gone," he said. "Left more'n hour ago for Bear Creek. He's going to make a speech there tonight."

Kimlocke dismounted wearily; they'd ridden nearly a hundred miles in twenty-four hours, and had accomplished exactly nothing.

"Garth thinks of everything," Billy said.

Kimlocke nodded, and wondered how long this had been going on, and in how many other settlements and towns Garth had pulled the same game.

"We can make it to Bear Creek in three or four hours," Billy suggested. "Why don't we try?"

KIMLOCKE shook his head. "We can do more good in Taylor's Landing." He was thinking of Cootes; and of Crockett and the Murrell gang, and the election only forty-eight hours off. There was too much of importance going on there.

They ate in the tavern and lay down afterward for a few hours' sleep. Kimlocke rose stiff and sore but refreshed, and he walked through the town and stopped to talk with people. He questioned them on the subject of politics and Crockett. With few exceptions the Blackville men were going to vote for Abbott. Even the ones he selected to watch the polls for Crockett showed little enthusiasm for their task, and he said to Billy finally: "Let's go. We can't do any more here."

They rode out of Blackville in low spirits. It grew dark and remained dark for two hours before the moon came up. They rode back through Shelby, swam the river and waded the swamp, and returned the horses each to its rightful owner.

They cantered into Taylor's Landing a little after noon the next day. Kimlocke left their sweating mounts with Billy and walked to the hotel, where he found Crockett waiting for him. Briefly, he told the woodsman what had happened, and about the posters. He turned down the hallway leading to Cootes' room when he had finished, but Crockett's voice stopped him.

"Cootes is dead. He died during the night."

Kimlocke stepped back into the lobby.

"Captain Jenks and the *Mary Lou* were bound downriver for Memphis, and they took him with them," Crockett went on in a low voice. "Miss Devlin helped collect what things of his we could find, and she wrote his wife and children a brief letter. She thought a woman could do that part better than a man."

From the river came the sudden loud wail of a steamboat whistle. A man passing the hotel stopped and yelled, "That's the *Cotton Belle!*" Again the whistle howled, and quickly the street began to fill with people. They poured out of buildings, from stores and warehouses and taverns, and they flowed down the street toward the landing. Kimlocke walked to the door and watched them, hardly seeing them.

Crockett said: "I want your word that you won't lay a hand on Jarrett until after the election."

Kimlocke stood in the doorway, his thoughts with Cootes. He was aware of someone calling his name; then he saw a man rushing toward him. The man called, "*Kimlocke!*" his voice shrill with excitement. He stopped in front of the hotel.

"Loganberry," he said hoarsely. "Trixy Gaudet! Come quickly."

Kimlocke stepped outside. "What's the matter?"

"Trixy Gaudet," the man repeated. "She's hurt."

HE started down the street, and Kimlocke moved after him. "What happened?" he asked, but the man didn't reply. They came to Front Street and turned left toward the park. The crowd was thick here along the levee. Over the heads of some men Kimlocke saw the steamboat, all brass and white paint, nosing into the bank. Steam jetted from her escape valves, and black smoke was pouring from her funnels. The packet's engines coughed, and her paddles thrashed in reverse, churning a white line of bubbles out into the river.

Kimlocke followed the man across the park to the houselike wagon. Loganberry was standing by the tailboard, and he saw the fury in the medicine-man's gray and sweating face. Loganberry drew aside the canvas flap covering the entrance of the wagon and stepped back.

Kimlocke stared down at Trixy. She lay in the wagon-bed with a blanket covering her to the shoulders. Her face was swollen. It was as though it had been stung by a swarm of bees, but Kimlocke knew bees had not made those bruises on her cheeks. There was blood on her lips, and more of it trickling out of her nose. Her right eye was closed and swollen black.

"Who did it?"

"Jarrett," Loganberry's voice was hoarse.

Kimlocke reached out and touched Trixy's shoulder. Her good eye opened, and she rolled her head to one side, groaning. He felt sick, and he said fiercely: "God damn the man who would beat a woman!" He started away from the wagon.

The park was silent and deserted, but from the levee and the river came sounds of cheering, another blast of the packet's whistle, and the noisy rumble of the plank being run out to shore. As Kimlocke started away, he heard Loganberry say something to the bearded settler; then the medicine-man was following him out of the park. "I came back from uptown and found her lying by the wagon. If I'd been a few minutes earlier—"

Kimlocke strode along the levee, his step long, nearly running. He turned into River Street and saw Crockett talking to Billy on the steps of Avery's saddle-shop. Across the street he saw Garth and Aurelia Devlin. He said sharply over his shoulder to Loganberry: "Go back to Trixy."

He turned into the Cotton Belle, but it was empty, and he came out and turned up River Street and entered Buck's Tavern. He was halfway through the door when his gaze fell on Jarrett at a table in a far corner. His rush took him in through the doors and halfway down the room before Jarrett realized what was happening.

Then the big man sprang to his feet and sidestepped quickly out from behind his table. Kimlocke swept a chair from his path as he advanced down the room, his hands reaching for Jarrett.

Jarrett leaped back around the table and Kimlocke seized it and flung it aside. Jarrett stepped back five quick paces, his face growing pale. Again Kimlocke sprang at him, rage sweeping aside all reason, all caution. This man before him had killed Cootes, and beaten a woman half to death. He was a thing of evil, a thing to be destroyed.

Kimlocke's fist flattened Jarrett's lips against his teeth. His other fist smashed the wind from Jarrett's lungs. Jarrett stumbled back, but Kimlocke leaped after him, grasped a chair and brought it crashing down.

Jarrett fell to his knees. Before he could rise Kimlocke kicked out with his foot. It caught Jarrett in the neck and catapulted him over backward. Kimlocke threw himself down on Jarrett's prostrate body. His fingers groped at Jarrett's throat.

Desperately Jarrett pushed him away and, rolling along the floor, came to his feet. He was a split second before Kimlocke. He was breathing hard, bleeding. For an instant he hesitated; then he whirled and ran for the side door, went through it in a frenzied rush and slammed it shut behind him.

In the split second it took Kimlocke to tear it open, Jarrett was down the steps and halfway across the street. He ducked into the crowd filling the street in front of the landing, reached the hotel and disappeared around the corner, running north along the levee.

Kimlocke plunged into the throng. He pushed a settler aside. Other men on the plank-walk stepped back and made way for him hurriedly. From the river came a roar of steam escaping and cheers and laughter from the spectators and passengers.

Then the throng parted as he reached the corner where the first of the passengers, a tall gray-haired man, had stepped ashore. It was Scott Kimlocke. For an instant father and son looked at each other; then the crowd between them closed, and Beau Kimlocke raced on. His mind was repeating, "Damn the man who would beat a woman," and he kept thinking of Cootes dead and torn to pieces by the gunpowder blast.

He ran along the levee with warehouses and white-topped freighters on his right hand, and on his left the Mississippi. He noticed a keelboat coming down the river a hundred yards offshore, two men on the roof, poling, and he sprinted until he was within twenty yards of Jarrett. The big man had come to the pile of logs that some half-dozen of the loggers were rolling over the bank with hooks. He stopped. Kimlocke saw the pistol in his hands but didn't slacken his pace, and Jarrett's hand wavered and fell. He raced for the river. One of the loggers shouted a warning as he leaped over the bank.

Again one of the loggers shouted a warning, but Kimlocke didn't understand what the man was trying to tell him. He wouldn't have stopped if he had. His rage was out of all control. He reached the bank and a blast of gunsmoke blew up in his face. He heard the bullet pass his head; then the smoke cleared, and he saw Jarrett standing on the raft below him. Jarrett was looking up, his mouth twitching when he saw he had missed. He dropped his pistol and sprang away across the raft.

As Kimlocke leaped over the bank after him he had the surprised thought: "The man's no good without his gang around him. He was all bluff." Jarrett was waving his hands at the keelboat floating with the current seventy-five yards out in the stream. He looked over his shoulder at the river flowing past his feet. The current was strong out here near the channel, and from Jarrett's hesitation, Kimlocke guessed he couldn't swim.

Kimlocke started running over the rough logs. The keelboat had turned in toward the raft in answer to Jarrett's signals; but it was obvious that it would be too late. The big man turned to face Kimlocke, hate and fear in his eyes; he was like a snake coiled, an animal cornered, and as dangerous.

Kimlocke charged Jarrett furiously. He hit him at a dead run, and with a wild yell Jarrett went over backward, arms flailing the air desperately for balance. Kimlocke fell with him. Black water closed over his head, and he felt himself sinking. He felt Jarrett's hands on his legs, felt the big man clawing him, trying to crawl up him to the surface. Jarrett's fingers pulled at his clothes; they raked his face; then they clamped solidly about his throat.

Kimlocke fought back a momentary panic. They'd sunk deep into the river, and he hadn't had a chance to draw a full breath. He struck out with his fist; drove it into Jarrett's stomach. It was like hitting the side of a barrel. He rained three hard blows against Jarrett, but the water cushioned their force.

Jarrett's fingers tightened about his throat. It was the frenzied grip of a drowning man, and Kimlocke knew another few seconds was all he could stand. His fingers groped for Jarrett's face and he pressed his thumbs against Jarrett's lips and pried them open. Hooking a thumb in each corner he pulled, stretching Jarrett's mouth in one of the most painful holds of rough-and-tumble fighting.

Jarrett writhed and shook his head furiously, wrenching it from side to side. Then his grip about Kimlocke's throat fell away, and Kimlocke let go his own grip and swam toward a murky gray light over his head.

He shot to the surface, choking for breath. He'd come up within a few feet of the raft and he clung to a log weakly. He retched, and was sick. Then strong arms drew him from the water and stretched him out on the raft. Three loggers, burly men in checked shirts, stood over him; two knelt at the raft's edge, peering down into the water. The third man said: "What had he done?"

When Kimlocke didn't answer, he moved off. More loggers were climbing down the bank. Kimlocke watched as they ran back and forth along the front of the raft, feeling for Jarrett with their poles. He lay a minute more, and when they didn't find anything he rose unsteadily and turned to the shore. He climbed the bank and started back along the levee. The packet had tied up at the landing and the keelboat was just drifting opposite River Street. As he walked near, he saw his father and Matt Taylor coming toward him along the levee.

He walked to meet them, and now all at once his legs began to shake and he felt spent and sick. In all his fighting he had never been possessed of such a blind rage. He had never before killed a man. He didn't like the feeling.

Chapter Eleven

Scott Kimlocke removed his beaver hat and wiped the dampness from his brow with the palm of his hand. He glanced upriver, then at Beau and he asked, frowning: "What the devil's going on here?"

Kimlocke didn't want to talk about it, and he parried his father's question with one of his own. "What're you doing here?"

"We've been a little short on news lately," Scott Kimlocke said, "and I thought I'd better run up and see what the trouble was."

"I sent in six reports. If they never reached you, Garth can probably tell you why."

Scott Kimlocke looked surprised. "I didn't think they'd tamper with the mails."

Beau watched some of the loggers who had followed him down the levee. They were feeling along the bank with their poles. They stopped at the landing and the crowd gathered around them, and Kimlocke saw the glances that were suddenly thrown in his direction and the interest and the excitement that gripped the men in the crowd. Some small boats put out from the landing.

"I boosted Crockett all I could editorially," his father was saying, "but more news of the canvass was what I needed."

Beau saw Crockett round the corner and come toward them. The tall woodsman greeted Scott Kimlocke, but his countenance was anything but cordial when he fixed Beau with an appraising eye. "What's this about your drowning Jarrett?"

Kimlocke returned his gaze steadily. "Did I drown him?"

"So the story goes."

"Jarrett was trying to get away. He was caught under the raft."

"Why was he trying to get away?" Crockett asked.

Beau Kimlocke was watching the loggers along the levee and the boats out on the river and he saw that more than a score of men had joined in the hunt for Jarrett. He said quietly: "Go and look at Trixy."

Crockett stared.

"He beat her." When Crockett looked at him doubtfully, he said: "I'll show you."

THEY walked along Front Street through the crowd that still lingered before the landing, past the Cotton Belle and the warehouse. They entered the park, and when they approached Loganberry's wagon the medicine-man came forward to meet them. There was a small crowd standing around. There was Cole and Avery.

"What happened?" Loganberry said, but Kimlocke brushed past him to the wagon and drew back the curtains that covered the entrance. He stepped aside and motioned with his hand for Crockett to approach.

Trixy lay on her back, just as he had left her. He watched Crockett's features flatten and his lips press into a thin line. He saw the pity and then the anger come into Crockett's glance, and he said: "Now do you see?"

Trixy's gaze jumped to Kimlocke and she whispered, "No more fighting." Her good eye closed, then opened, and there was fear in it. "Where's Jarrett?"

"Don't you worry about him."

"The Murrell bunch," Trixy whispered. Her lips twitched. "Garth!"

Crockett laid the palm of his hand on her cheek gently. "They won't touch you, either." He drew back from the wagon, and his face was solemn. Watching, Beau thought: "It's shocked him. Maybe it's what was needed to wake him up."

Crockett must have read his thoughts. "I still don't approve of a candidate brawling his way through an election campaign." But his words didn't carry quite the same conviction as they had on former occasions.

Kimlocke looked up and saw Aurelia Devlin by the tailboard of the wagon. Shock in her eyes, she stood looking at Trixy, and her lips parted and both hands went to her mouth, covering it.

She turned her head, and her glance met Kimlocke's. "Jarrett," she said. "That's why you—"

She stopped, leaned down to touch Trixy, and she whispered, "My dear!" Then her hands dropped to Trixy's shoulders and she repeated: "Oh, my dear!" There was hesitation in Trixy's face; then as the need and the longing of a woman hurt for one of her own kind overcame it, Trixy's hands came out from under the blanket and seized both of Aurelia's.

Aurelia Devlin: "What a pretty girl."

Kimlocke drew back and walked a dozen yards away with Loganberry and Crockett. For a moment the three men looked at each other in silence.

"I can't understand why Jarrett would want to beat her." Loganberry was gaunt and drawn; but the first fury had died out of him. "She never did anything to him."

Kimlocke saw Cole and Avery standing at one side and he walked over. "What do you think of the election now?" he asked.

Cole looked away uncomfortably.

"Is this and Cootes' murder the sort of thing you've been used to having in other canvasses?"

Cole said quietly: "No."

"Then go tell your friends what you've seen," Kimlocke shot at them angrily. "Go tell them that Jarrett's dead, but there's still Garth and the whole Murrell gang, and if they won't organize now, it will be too late. Tell them that, Cole; tell them that we can't carry this fight alone. We need their help."

He saw that what had happened to Trixy had made a strong impression on these two, as well as on Crockett.

"You can count on me," Cole said, and Avery nodded.

"Talk to them," Kimlocke said, "and tomorrow night we'll meet and lay our plans."

He rejoined Crockett and Loganberry. When Aurelia saw them watching her, she said something to Trixy and came toward them determinedly.

"A wagon isn't any place for a sick girl." She included all of them in her glance.

"We can take her to the hotel," Kimlocke said. "It's filled, but she can have my room."

They walked back to the wagon, and Trixy smiled at them with her one good eye. The three men wrapped a blanket around her, then picked her up and carried her from the park. The crowd had straggled off, and the street was nearly empty when they turned into it and approached the hotel. They carried Trixy to Kimlocke's room and laid her on the bed.

"She should have someone to take care of her," Aurelia said.

"That's my job," Loganberry answered.

Kimlocke gathered up his few belongings, and they left the room and stood in the hall. Loganberry drew a bottle of medicine from an inside pocket. He twisted off

the cork and tilting the bottle to his lips drank freely. "She'll get good care. I promise you."

Crockett had joined Scott Kimlocke in the lobby, and Loganberry went to offer them a drink. Beau waited in the corridor. He could hear the low murmur of Trixy's and Aurelia's voices in the room; then the door opened, and Aurelia stepped out into the corridor. She pulled the door shut and looked up at him, waiting for him to let her by.

Kimlocke shook his head, and she backed away from him uncertainly. "There's some things I want to explain," he said.

Her glance was cool, questioning.

"First of all, about the night you saw Simon Cootes and me lying in the street, supposedly drunk."

"I should think you'd want to forget that," she retorted.

"Cootes had had a few too many perhaps," Kimlocke said, "but there'd been no brawl. We were jumped by three of the Murrell men."

AURELIA smiled. "Mr. Garth said you would try and put the blame on the Murrell gang. He said you'd probably blame them, or him, or even my uncle, for Simon Cootes' accident."

"You think it was an accident?" Kimlocke asked in astonishment.

"Wasn't it?"

"Cootes' being at the wagon when it blew up might have been; but the gunpowder being there and lighted by one of the Murrell gang was at Garth's orders. He wanted the printing-wagon destroyed."

"I don't believe it."

"Ask your uncle."

"I don't have to," she cried. "Oran has already denied having anything to do with it."

"He's a liar," Kimlocke said angrily. "He's also a murderer, and a thief. The day we met on the packet I was carrying twenty thousand dollars in campaign funds, and he sent Jarrett to steal it. Now he's planning to steal the election."

"I don't believe that, either. If it were I would have heard. My uncle would have said something."

"Maybe he doesn't know it." Kimlocke's voice softened, and he added, "Whether you're aware of the fact or not, this is Garth's election. Your uncle's merely a figurehead."

"That's not so."

"Then your uncle is as guilty as Garth."

"Neither of them is guilty of anything," she said stubbornly. "Please let me by now."

He stepped back, and she walked around him down the hall. He gave her time to leave the hotel, then he walked back to the lobby where Scott Kimlocke and Crockett were waiting for him. "You'd better tell me all that's happened," the older Kimlocke said. "And start at the beginning. I'm completely in the dark, remember."

Briefly Beau related what had happened since his leaving Memphis. When he came to the part about Cootes, he saw the shocked amazement in his father's eyes.

Scott Kimlocke said when he was finished: "It's bad. The election's only two days off, and Abbott's getting the lead on us. I sent some checkers out into the district, and their reports weren't good."

Crockett said: "You can't always go by that."

"I think you can this time. They're winning votes with lies, with false promises, with threats."

"They'll win some votes that way."

"But you think you'll still be elected?"

"I hope to be." Crockett turned to Beau, his eyes drawing together in a frown. "Jarrett got what he deserved, but I hope nothing else like that happens."

"I'm afraid on election day something will," Beau answered. "The only way to have an honest election is to drive the Murrell gang completely out of town, and that's exactly what I intend to do."

Crockett turned to the door. "I've always played my politics clean," he said, "and won."

He stepped outside and turned away down the street and the Kimlockes looked after him silently. "He's coming around," Beau said finally, "but he's having a hard time doing it. He's honest, and just; and he has his ideals; but he's a fighter too, and it's beginning to show through."

"We'll take your things down to the *Bayou Queen,*" his father said. "One of the boilers cracked on the way up, and she may be here for a couple of days."

They walked down to the landing and found the captain of the packet on board. He led the way to a small cabin next to Scott Kimlocke's, and Beau left his baggage there. They returned to the hotel afterward and the rest of the afternoon and that evening were spent discussing the election.

Crockett came in later with word that some fishermen had found Jarrett's body. "It was floating just this side of Black Swamp." The tall woodsman was worried. "Feeling's running pretty high over Jarrett. Those on our side say he got what was coming to him; but there are others who don't agree. You'd better keep out of sight, Beau."

"He will," Scott Kimlocke said.

"They've already given him one good drubbing. He might not get off so lucky next time."

The woodsman left, and an hour later the Kimlockes walked down to the *Bayou Queen*. The sound of music came from one of the taverns, and voices, and laughter. On the river all was still and peaceful.

IN the morning Beau Kimlocke spoke with Cole and Avery. They had been busy. "After what's happened, people are beginning to realize the sort of election this is going to be," Cole reported, "and I think we'll have well over a hundred men we can count on."

"Good," Kimlocke said. "Pass the word around, and lay your plans. There isn't much time left, so have everybody there."

Scott Kimlocke took the stage back to Memphis that afternoon. "I was going back on the *Bayou Queen* last night," he said, "but that cracked boiler changed my plans. I want to be sure to be in Memphis tomorrow."

The other passengers had already taken seats inside, and the driver was on the box, ready with the reins gripped in his hands. Across the street Beau saw Aurelia come out of a store with a basket over her arm. Farther down the street he saw Garth in the doorway of Buck's Tavern.

Scott Kimlocke said: "I'll see you after the election."

They shook hands, and he climbed into the coach. At a crack of the driver's whip, the horses leaned into their collars and the stage rolled away.

Aurelia stood across the street from the coach that was taking Scott Kimlocke back to Memphis. When Beau looked her way, she stepped down off the porch and walked quickly along the sidewalk. She didn't look back, but she slowed a little when Garth crossed the walk from Buck's Tavern and fell into step beside her. He took the basket from her hand and they walked down the street and turned the corner at the Cotton Belle. The *Bayou Queen* lay at the landing. From somewhere inside her came the muffled sounds of a hammer striking iron.

She stopped on the bank and looked down at two colored boys fishing over the stern of the packet. There was something she had to tell Garth, something that over the last few weeks had taken shape in her mind, and now was pressing for release. When Kimlocke had caught her

in the hallway yesterday she'd denied, for reasons of pride, her knowledge of Garth's tactics; but she'd known almost everything there was to know about them. How could she help it? She had eyes, and ears—and a conscience still.

"I understand that what happened to Simon Cootes the other day was no accident," she said. "What happened to Trixy Gaudet was inexcusable. I have also learned that you've been buying votes, and that you intend to use the Murrell gang to keep Crockett voters away from the polls."

Garth smiled down at her in amusement. "Why should you bother your pretty head about such things?"

"I don't like that kind of canvassing. My uncle doesn't like it, either." Aurelia's voice was resolute. "I've seen enough of politics to know that it's a dirty business; but killing an innocent man and beating a woman and intimidating voters is going too far."

"And you're objecting?" Garth spoke softly. "Is that it?"

"Yes," Aurelia answered.

The humor went out of his eyes. "Perhaps before we go any further, you and I had better have an understanding." There was a brittle quality to Garth's voice now. "After our marriage, my politics and my business dealings will be no concern of yours. You will not question them, nor criticize them, nor interfere with them in any way. Is that clear?"

Aurelia drew in her breath sharply. "I would never question your affairs if they were even halfway honest and decent."

"I'm afraid you'll just have to get used to them, my dear, because I cannot promise that they will always be halfway honest or decent."

"I don't think I ever could." Aurelia shook her head slowly. "I don't think I'd ever want to get used to them."

"Do you realize what you're saying?"

She nodded. It was what she'd been trying to say all along. It hadn't been an easy decision to arrive at. She had laid her plans for the future carefully. It had looked at times almost as though her dreams were to be realized.

Garth was regarding her shrewdly. "Could it be that friend Kimlocke has got something to do with this?"

Aurelia returned his gaze.

"Seems to me you were quite friendly with him the other times you met. Kimlocke's a nuisance," Garth went on. "He's been stirring up the townspeople with talk of organizing an opposition to fight us at the polls tomorrow."

"He's only trying to make the election a free and honest one."

"Then it is Kimlocke?" Garth smiled crookedly.

There wasn't any use in denying his assertion. She liked Kimlocke, yes; though it made little difference whether she did or not. After the votes were counted and the outcome of the election known, he would leave for the western territory, and she wouldn't see him again.

Garth said: "You'd better take time to reconsider."

Aurelia shook her head. As far as she was concerned, there was nothing more to be said, and excusing herself, she stepped around Garth and started away up the street. When she glanced back, she saw Garth standing before the Cotton Belle, looking in her direction, and all at once a sense of relief swept through her that was fresh and clean and satisfying.

There was plenty of work to be done when she reached her wagon and printing-press. She set up type for a poster her uncle had left for her. She turned out fifty copies, and after that there were other little chores that took up most of the afternoon. By the time she was finished and had the press cleaned and the type distributed, the sun was beginning to set over the river.

Aurelia watched the sunset but with less absorption for its beauties than on former evenings. She was thinking of the future, for herself and for her uncle; she could see only a continuation of what they had always known and she felt a moment of despair. There was still just enough light to see by and she rose finally and started back for her wagon.

The sun had set when Garth stepped out of the Cotton Belle and stood on the walk, looking this way and that. He spotted Abbott just entering the park south along the levee and he called, "Abbott," but the other didn't hear and he started after him with a rapid stride. He called again, "Abbott," but the older man didn't turn. Abbott crossed the park to the front of his wagon and drew out a sack of grain and poured some into a bucket. He picked up the bucket and started away toward the horses grazing on the edge of the forest when he heard Garth's footsteps and looked around.

Garth approached and said, "I want to talk to you a minute, Abbott. About tomorrow." He was thinking this old man wasn't much good for anything. "Your job will be paymaster, and I've made arrangements with Buck for you to use the rear room of his tavern. Our men will come in there when they need money. Keep a close check on how much each one takes, and don't let any of them have more than forty at a time."

Abbott set his pail on the ground. "I don't like that kind of a job," he said. "It would be better if I got out and mingled with the voters."

"It wouldn't do any good."

"What else is there, then?"

"Something's got to be done about Kimlocke." Garth's lips twisted in a smile. "But I don't think you'd care for that job, either."

Abbott looked up quickly. "What do you mean?"

"Kimlocke's getting troublesome." Garth's smile disappeared. "He's organized an opposition in the settlements. I've sent men to break that up, but now he's doing the same thing here: and the townspeople are listening to him."

"So?" Abbott asked.

Garth shrugged his shoulders. "Need you ask?"

Abbott took a step forward and peered at Garth in the waning light. He drew back and shook his head vigorously. "I won't have any part of it." His voice rose excitedly. "You assured me after that printer was killed there wouldn't be any more."

"I didn't think there would be any need for it then."

"There isn't any need now." Abbott's tone was firm.

"I'll be the judge of that," Garth said.

"I won't have any part of it. I have no heart for this canvass anyway." Abbott spoke passionately. "I don't like your politics, Garth; not a bit."

"This is something of a surprise." Garth paused. "And I don't like it. It doesn't augur well for our future association."

Garth's anger against this old man flared violently, then checked at a sound behind him. He turned and saw Aurelia Devlin standing by the wagon. One hand was resting on the canvas hood, the other was pressed to her lips. Above her fingers, in what light there was left, Garth saw the whiteness of her face.

He watched Aurelia and said: "You were a little excited, Abbott. Think it over carefully—talk it over—and you'll change your mind." He hesitated. "I'll be at the Cotton Belle all evening."

He raised his hat and walked rapidly across the park.

Aurelia faced her uncle. She said tensely: "We've got to warn Kimlocke."

Her uncle nodded. He said, "Wait a minute," and went to the wagon. He reached inside under the seat and drew out a pistol. With a quick glance at the priming,

Electioneering for Davy Crockett.

he put it in his coat pocket and came toward her. She fell into step beside him and they walked swiftly from the park. It was dark now, except for a faint color out on the river, and Aurelia groped for her uncle's hand and found it. She gave it a quick squeeze and he returned the pressure instantly. Somehow she felt closer to him now than she ever had before. They walked a few steps and then broke into a run.

Chapter Twelve

BEAU KIMLOCKE WALKED DOWN THE STREET TO the hotel, and he felt a sudden surge of confidence about the outcome of the election. He had talked to Cole and Avery after his father's coach had left, and the two store owners had promised him that there would be a hundred men at the meeting that night. Opposition to Garth and the Murrell gang was rising.

He paused in the doorway of the hotel when someone called his name and he saw Crockett coming toward him in the half-light. Crockett was carrying his long rifle and a pair of saddlebags slung over his shoulder. "I'm going to Shelby," he said. "A lot of settlers will vote there, and I think it's important. You'll have to handle things here while I'm gone."

"I'll do my best."

Crockett was about to say something more; then he changed his mind. "Good luck," he said, and turned and strode off up the street. Kimlocke watched him go. It was a lot of responsibility he had been left with, and he wasn't sure he liked it. He turned into the hotel and nodded to Matt Taylor who was seated in the lobby. He walked down the hall to Trixy's room. When he knocked, there was a pause and the sound of a chair scraping the floor; then Trixy's voice saying, "Come in."

Kimlocke pushed open the door and looked down the barrel of a pistol. Loganberry lowered the gun and grinned sheepishly. "I'm just a little nervous," he apologized.

Trixy lay on a narrow bed in the corner. She wore a white nightdress and a blue jacket with ribbons in front and there was a ribbon in her hair, and some of the old sparkle in her one good eye. Her other eye was blacker than ever, her lips still swollen and blue.

"We were just talking about you," Loganberry said. "We were trying to think of some way I could help you with the election tomorrow. Dr. Gaudet is indisposed, and our supply of pain-killer is nearly out."

"Trixy's your first care," Kimlocke answered.

"He's been a faithful watchdog," Trixy said softly, "and a gentle and kind nurse."

"What do you think of Crockett's chances?" Loganberry asked uncomfortably.

"Better." Kimlocke smiled at his friend's embarrassment. "It all depends on how much opposition we put up to the Murrell gang. If we're stronger than they are, then the election will be free and Crockett will have a chance. If they're stronger than we are—" He shrugged.

"With you to lead them,"—Trixy's voice was confident—"there's nothing to worry about."

Kimlocke recalled the times before that he'd been with Trixy, and there'd been a flirtatious light in her eyes. But there wasn't too much of it now; and he felt relieved.

THEY talked awhile longer; then Kimlocke rose to go to the *Bayou Queen* for one of the posters he had brought back from Shelby. It was just another bit of evidence of Garth's underhanded methods that he wanted to show to the townsmen. If he could convince them, they would rise up and fight.

Trixy said, "Good luck," and he grinned and held up two fingers crossed. He went out and walked down the hall to the lobby. Matt Taylor was standing behind his desk.

"I'll meet you at Cole's place in five minutes," Kimlocke said. "It's nearly eight."

He went out into the street and turned right toward the *Bayou Queen*. It was night now with no moon and only a few stars showing through gaps in the clouds, and River Street was blacker than usual in spite of the lights streaming from the open window and doorways of taverns. He stepped down off the walk and he noticed the street was lined with horses and rigs, and he knew settlers were beginning to come into town, that they would be coming in all night, for a little fun, and for the election tomorrow. They would come with their families, and money in their pockets.

He had just reached the river in front of the Cotton Belle when he heard his name called. He stopped and looked back, saw the slim figure of a girl running toward him through the darkness. She drew near, and he recognized Aurelia Devlin. She was holding her skirts up with her two hands. Breathless, she stopped before him.

"I've been looking all over for you." She looked over her shoulder, and his gaze following hers, saw the half-dozen men moving slowly toward the landing from the Cotton Belle. She gripped his arm. "The Murrell gang—"

He looked down at her and knew instantly that he was in danger. But he hesitated, knowing she was in danger as well, and in that split-second the door of the Cotton Belle opened and a man stepped out in a flood of light. Garth's voice said: "There he is—over by the bank."

Aurelia pushed Kimlocke with both hands and whispered: "You can't fight them all." He fell back and she followed. In the same breath she added: "I'm going with you."

He thought of the beating Trixy had received, and he grasped her arm and drew her over the bank with him. They ran down the slope toward the river and she gasped: "Faster."

She was running with short quick steps, three to his one, and would have stumbled if he hadn't steadied her when they reached the narrow beach at the river's edge. Above them came the pounding of feet.

He released Aurelia's arm and she ran ahead of him up the plank that led aboard the packet. Two lights shone amidships, and one in the wheelhouse overhead. They reached the deck as the first of the Murrell men started up the plank behind them. Kimlocke gripped the ends of the plank with both hands; raised his end, and taking two steps sideways, let go. There was a splash as the plank hit the water, a second splash and an angry curse.

From the wheelhouse came a startled shout: "What's going on down there?"

They had won a few precious moments of delay, but already they could hear the Murrell men plunging into the river. They ran down the deck to the stern, and a glance at the levee showed Garth framed in the light from the Cotton Belle. Hatless, he was bent forward with his hands cupped to his eyes. Kimlocke glanced at the river. It was on three sides of them.

"We're trapped," Aurelia whispered.

"Can you swim?"

"Yes."

He swung his leg over the side, stopped. "Wait." He swung back and groped down the railing. Halfway to the stern his fingers came in contact with a rope. He called to Aurelia in a low voice and she came and stood beside him.

He said: "The dinghy. I'll go down first."

He swung over the railing and drew on the rope until he could feel the boat with his feet. He drew it in against the packet's side and dropped onto the bow seat, holding to the packet with his left hand. With his right he steadied Aurelia as she swung over the railing. His arm curved around her waist and he lowered her into the dinghy beside him. Her body pressed his tightly for an instant, then she stepped over the middle seat into the stern.

And it was then a door in the side of the packet opened and a lantern's brilliant light flooded the dinghy. Behind the lantern Kimlocke made out the bulky shape of the packet's captain.

"Is that you, Kimlocke?" There was surprise in the captain's voice. "What the—"

Too late, Kimlocke saw the shadow rise up behind the captain. He started to shout a warning as a long arm swooped down. There was a thud, and the captain fell. The lantern fell and crashed out.

Kimlocke's warning died in his throat, and he yanked the rope from the railing and shoved against the packet with all his strength. He caught his balance as the dinghy rocked out into the stream, and he crouched in the bow. He heard boots running along the packet's deck and out of the tail of his eye he saw Garth poised on the river-bank. For an instant the dinghy was in darkness.

Kimlocke heard Aurelia's urgent whisper behind him. "They'll follow."

A light appeared on the packet, small at first, then suddenly brighter. A tongue of flame licked over the railing. More flames shot up beside it. The lantern's breaking had splashed oil on some bales of cotton stacked on the desk. Kimlocke could see the flames lick up the sides of the cotton, growing higher, growing brighter.

And now he could plainly see the group of men on the packet's stern. They were peering downstream at the dinghy that had drifted with the current and was a hundred yards below the landing and some fifty from the bank. Great burly men in slouch hats, they stood a minute in the light, then vanished at a sudden cry of "Fire!" from the town.

Kimlocke groped in the bottom of the boat. When he glanced over his shoulder, he saw Garth had disappeared too. In his place men were running up and leaping over the bank. Some carried buckets. A crowd gathered almost instantly as the cry of "Fire!" spread, and the big metal ring in front of the blacksmith shop began to clang.

The whole stern of the packet was ablaze. The flames had leaped from the cotton to a barrel of oil and then up the walls to the hurricane deck. They flickered against the levee in weird contortions and spread their fan of light out over the river. The dinghy was well within that orb of light.

Kimlocke rose to his knees and looked at Aurelia. "No oars," he said calmly.

She was sitting stiffly on the stern seat with her hands clasped in her lap. She said tensely: "Look behind you."

Another boat was pushing out from the landing. There were four men in it, burly men in slouch hats. Oars thrashed the surface of the river as the boat nosed downriver in pursuit.

Kimlocke bent and grasped the middle seat with both hands and pulled. It creaked but didn't give, and he yanked again; and this time one end flew up, almost spilling him over the side into the water. He twisted the board, twisting the other end free; then he knelt quickly and using the board as a paddle, swung the dinghy's bow downstream, sending it forward with long powerful strokes.

"Left," Aurelia called. "You're too far to the right."

He glanced over his shoulder and switched the paddle to the other side. When Aurelia said in a strained voice, "You're too far to the left now," he didn't look back again.

"One of the roughest stretches of water on the river is just south of here," he said. "We don't want to get caught in it."

Aurelia said: "They're gaining on us."

He paddled hard on the port side and swung the nose of the dinghy out toward the middle of the river where the current was stronger. He could hear the creak of the oarlocks behind him. Then they sounded off to his left and he looked around in surprise and saw the other boat had not altered its course to match the dinghy's. And it was no longer silhouetted in the glow from the packet.

What that meant came to Kimlocke slowly—that if he couldn't see the Murrell men, neither could they see him. Both boats were out of the fan of light now, in complete darkness with the black backdrop of night behind them.

He stopped paddling and leaned toward Aurelia, whispering: "Don't make any noise."

For ten minutes they drifted, and then they heard oars again. The sound grew louder, but never close. It drew opposite the dinghy, then grew fainter.

"They've given up," Kimlocke said. "They're going back."

He heard her breath of relief. He helped her up onto the stern seat. The fire and the landing were far away now. Clouds had spread across the entire sky. He held his hand before his face; he couldn't see it—couldn't see Aurelia, nor the boat, nor the river. It was a black night, and damp with the smell of rain.

"Why did you come to warn me?" he put the question to her suddenly.

"They were going to kill you," she replied.

It wasn't what he wanted to know. "And Garth?"

She was silent.

"I suppose it's none of my business," he apologized.

"It's no secret," she said instantly. "I don't intend to ever see him again."

Kimlocke was startled.

"You were right about him." Her voice was low, barely audible. "In every respect."

He leaned forward in the darkness, then hesitated and drew back without touching her. She'd renounced Garth; and that was all. Between *them* nothing had changed. They were as far apart in their thinking, in their needs, as ever.

"I've got to get back to the Landing," he said.

"If there was some way I could help—" she answered.

He picked up his makeshift paddle without answering and swung the boat around. He had some difficulty, and he realized suddenly that the current had become stronger. He remembered the rough water south of the Landing, and uneasiness gripped him. He wielded the paddle quickly.

But he knew the worst had happened. So gradually he hadn't noticed, the river had taken on a new sound. It grew louder and became a rippling noise, like a wave falling back on a pebble beach. The dinghy shivered and dipped, gave a lurch and then flowed on smoothly again. The deeper sound continued.

Aurelia gasped, "What was that?"

"Sandbar."

"In the middle of the river?" she asked in surprise.

"An island," he said; "we're in between two of them. Notice how the current's faster. Notice that noise?"

The sound of the river was all around them and he cursed it when he thought of the meeting back in town and the work that he should be doing. They crossed over another bar and nearly swamped. He heard Aurelia begin bailing with her hands. She said: "How far do you suppose we've come?"

"Far enough to make it a long walk back," he said.

They were half full of water when the dinghy struck a snag. The bow nosed down; the stern rose, then slowly settled as the dinghy filled completely with water. Kimlocke stood up and drew Aurelia up beside him.

"Hold on to me," he said.

The dinghy rolled as he spoke, and he leaped clear, dragging Aurelia with him. Water closed over his head. When he came up, he drew her to the surface, coughing and gasping for breath.

"Hold on," he repeated, and she gripped his shoulder. His fingers felt for the dinghy in the darkness, found it floating bottom up, with just the keel above the surface.

He drew Aurelia to it, and she grasped it with both hands. He kicked off his shoes and removed coat and cravat. "We mustn't get separated," he said. And he felt despair growing in him. By now the townsmen were meeting.

He took his bearings from the drift of the current and started kicking with his feet, pushing the boat laboriously ahead of him. He swam steadily, and he heard Aurelia kicking. After a while she stopped. He could tell she was tiring. He wiped the water from his eyes. "We've come a good ways," he said encouragingly.

"I'm all right," she gasped.

But he noticed her efforts grew weaker, until finally she was content to cling to the boat silently.

It began to rain. It came down hard, hissing into the water, and it stung his face when he turned it up to the sky. They went on and now Aurelia kicked with her feet again and he thought, "She's game," and redoubled his own efforts.

And so they came to land. Whether it was the mainland or an island, Kimlocke didn't know. He was kicking, and his knees struck bottom. He put down his hands and felt mud with his fingers. He stood up, and to his surprise the water came only to his knees.

He carried Aurelia ashore. She lay still in exhaustion, and he sank to his knees beside her, with the water running off him in a dozen little streams, and felt only grateful for the solid earth beneath him.

But as the minutes passed, he began to think once again of Cole and Avery and the meeting back at the Landing. He felt Aurelia shiver, and he moved closer and pushed wet strands of hair from her forehead. "Cold?" he asked.

She rolled away from him. "No—sick. I swallowed some water."

He raised her head in his lap and wished he had something to put around her. She lay still, breathing hard, and after a few minutes he lowered her gently to the ground. "Stay here," he said, "while I look around."

She didn't answer, and he rose to his feet and moved off. He thought: *There must be a quick way to the Landing.* He walked away from the river, and the ground grew soft and spongy underfoot and in spots was covered with water. He turned back to the river and followed the shoreline. Here there was thick mud. With each step he sank into it to his knees.

He tried walking in the river, up to his waist, but it was equally tiring to push against the current. He stopped as she called above the river's noise: "Beau!"

It was faint, and he realized how far he had come.

"*Beau!*" Now there was a note of panic in her voice.

He floundered through the water, climbed a bank to higher ground, broke into a run.

"Beau!"

It came from under his feet, and he dropped to his knees. She was sitting up, and when he touched her, she seized him with both hands. He drew her to him and she came willingly. She was trembling, frightened.

He kissed her. Her lips responded, and she returned his kiss with a fierceness, and abandonment he hadn't known she possessed.

"I love you." He whispered it against her mouth.

She clung to him. "And I love you." Her reply was almost a sob. "I do. I can't help it."

She lay in his arms, her face pressed against his shoulder. He held her gently. They didn't speak. Their silence, their reluctance to speak of it at all, built a wall rapidly between them. Kimlocke could feel it growing, and he could almost see it when she drew back finally and murmured, "I'm all right now. I don't know what was the matter with me. I wasn't afraid until you went away."

He helped her to her feet when she tried to rise. He brought his thoughts back to their immediate problem. The rain had stopped, and he was thankful for that. He said: "It's pretty swampy along here. We can cut through to higher ground."

They pushed on. The water grew deeper. It rose over Kimlocke's chest and now Aurelia could no longer touch bottom. She held on to his shoulders with both hands and he had to drag her through the water. It grew more stagnant the farther they went. The mud underfoot grew deeper.

Kimlocke stopped at a hummock of land. "This is as far as we go."

"If we stop, you won't get back in time."

He drew himself onto the hummock, and then drew her up beside him. She hadn't been able to keep the weariness out of her voice. "We might wander around in circles all night and end up back at the river," he said. "This is Black Swamp we're in." He'd realized it a while ago, when the water had grown so deep.

She said quietly, "What does that mean?"

"It means we're ten miles south of the Landing, and I don't know how far from solid land."

Aurelia lay back tiredly. "Go on without me," she begged. "Leave me here. I'll be all right, and you can send someone back for me in the morning."

He shook his head. "We'll both stay."

She sat up quickly. "We won't." It was sharp, insistent. "We're going on."

Before he could stop her, she slid off the hummock. He felt in the darkness until he located her, then sliding into the water beside her, he put his arms around her.

She came readily, without protest or restraint, and their lips touched and then clung to each other. Then she pushed him away, both fists shoving against his chest as she cried, "No," fiercely. "No, *no!*" and he knew for sure then that the barrier between them didn't exist in his mind only.

Chapter Thirteen

USUALLY AT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING Taylor's Landing would be hushed in sleep, but this election night River Street was brightly lighted by torches and as crowded as on a busy Saturday. A score of buggies and wagons were camped in the park down along the levee. Men and women on horseback and whole families on foot had come into town. The women were gayly dressed and the men wore their best homespun and the children's hair was carefully brushed. Some had been traveling since noon. Others who lived nearby had started after the day's work was over. Hundreds were still to come.

Trixy and Doctor Loganberry stood on the walk before the hotel.

"Where's Kimlocke?" Trixy repeated the question she had asked a dozen times during the night.

Loganberry answered wearily: "I wish I knew."

"And Aurelia," Trixy added.

They had learned some of the details from Clay Abbott and the captain of the *Bayou Queen*. They had pieced it together with mounting apprehension and their apprehension had reached its peak when Kimlocke and Aurelia hadn't returned by midnight. "I wish we'd hear something." Trixy's voice was hoarse with a weariness that made her ache. She had insisted upon getting up out of bed. There had been no sleep for any of them so far that night.

She turned into the lobby of the hotel and dropped into a chair to watch the activity in the street. She saw Garth come out of the Cotton Belle and stand on the steps in the flickering light of torches and lanterns. She half-rose from her chair, but Loganberry pressed her back.

"I wouldn't give him the satisfaction," he said. "He wouldn't tell you anything if he knew."

She sank back and watched Garth step down to the walk. She saw the satisfied smile on his lips as he turned away up the street, and a fresh fear gripped her. Loganberry stood beside her a moment; then he said: "I think I'll walk around and see how things are going."

He was gone forty minutes and when he came in he reported: "Everything quiet so far; but I've talked to Cole, and he tells me that the meeting waited two hours for Kimlocke; and when he didn't show up, everybody went home. The fools! The stupid, thick-headed fools!"

Trixy rose restlessly and went outside to the corner and looked south along the levee. She could see lights in the park where the wagons were camped—and smell the heavy odor of burnt wood that rose from the charred and grounded hulk of the *Bayou Queen*. As she turned back into the hotel entrance she saw Davy Crockett come out of the polling-place with rapid strides and cross the street. He entered the hotel on her heels.

"They've started buying votes already," he said. "They're paying twenty dollars apiece for them."

Loganberry rose from his chair. "I've been waiting for it. Who?"

"Jack Abercrombie."

"What proof?"

"Abercrombie's wife told Larse Harcum, and Larse told me. There goes Abercrombie now!" Billy pointed through the window to a small middle-aged man walking rapidly down the street.

Loganberry looked around at Trixy and Matt Taylor, who had come into the lobby. He said, "Someone's got to do something," and stepped to the door.

Trixy jumped after him and caught his arm. "Not you."

Matt Taylor pushed by him quickly. "The townsmen will back you up. I'll get some of them."

Loganberry brushed Trixy's hand from his sleeve and stepped through the doorway. "Abercrombie!" he called.

The settler glanced back and stopped on the steps of the Cotton Belle—a small and nervous man. Loganberry stepped toward him and said: "I understand you were paid twenty dollars to vote for Abbott instead of Crockett tomorrow."

Trixy became aware of two Murrell men coming swiftly down the street. They came within ten paces of Loganberry and stopped.

One said: "What's eating you, friend?"

Loganberry turned and looked at them, and his glance went on around the broken circle of curious settlers who had stopped to listen. His gaze returned to the Murrell men, and he said: "Which one of you paid Abercrombie the twenty dollars?"

"What twenty dollars?" the leader said.

"You know what twenty dollars."

The Murrell men turned to Abercrombie in surprise. "Did any of us give you money?"

Abercrombie shook his head.

"You're lying!" Loganberry's voice rose angrily.

TRIXY started across the street. She picked up her skirts and ran around the back of a wagon that was passing. She caught Loganberry's arm. "Don't you see, it's no use," she cried. "You'll never get Abercrombie or anybody else to admit they took money from this bunch."

The Murrell men grinned.

"Don't start anything," Trixy begged. "Please!" She drew on his arm.

Loganberry said fiercely, "Go away," and pushed her back. He looked behind her; she turned and saw Taylor with Cole and Avery and a dozen men coming down the street at a run. Then one of the Murrell men put his fingers to lips and blew a shrill signal, and more of the Murrell men came out of Buck's tavern and the Cotton Belle until they matched the townsmen man for man.

One of the Murrell men nearest Loganberry said: "Well, friend, what are you going to do about it?"

Trixy noticed the drawn look about Loganberry's mouth.

"What are you going to do about it?" the Murrell man repeated, and the other Murrell man drew closer when Loganberry hesitated.

For one breath all the street was hushed. In the distance a man was singing, and upriver came the sound of a whistle, faint and far away. Loganberry looked around and said something to Cole, who looked at Avery and wet his lips and shook his head.

With that Trixy knew it was all over. To take the first step, against the Murrell men would require more than courage. It would take a man with supreme confidence in himself. Loganberry didn't have that confi-

dence. With Beau Kimlocke absent, the townsmen were leaderless.

With a smile the leader of the Murrell men turned his back on the townsmen. Others turned away, and one said something that made some settlers in the crowd laugh. Trixy heard that laugh spread rapidly, and she saw the faces of many settlers break into smiles.

The townsmen stood a moment longer; then one by one they dropped off sheepishly into the crowd until only Loganberry was left. He stood alone in the middle of the street, tall and thin and conspicuous in his gray-checked suit. He glanced toward the hotel; Trixy could guess the terrible struggle that was going on in him, and her heart went out to him until she was suddenly trembling.

It had happened swiftly, and now Loganberry brushed past Trixy, his face gray, and entered the hotel. Trixy ran after him, found him sitting in a chair by the window, his gaze on the rough boards at his feet.

He looked up and said: "Garth and his gang will walk away with the election now."

Trixy took his head in her hands impulsively and pressed it to her breast. She held him tightly and touched his forehead with her lips. She had cared for him before; there had been a time when she had thought she cared for Kimlocke, but now in Loganberry's weakness, she knew that she loved this man more.

Chapter Fourteen

ONE SLOW STEP AT A TIME KIMLOCKE WADED through the swamp, Aurelia clinging to his shoulder as she trudged beside him in water up to her waist. All around them the swamp lay wet and dripping after the heavy rain. The moon had broken through the clouds and Kimlocke could make out the dim shapes of trees, moss-covered and with vines clinging from their branches; and the great hummocks of land spaced every fifty or a hundred yards. In between was black water, muddy and stagnant-smelling.

But now Kimlocke's step quickened, and a cry of hope sprang to Aurelia's lips. As though walking upstairs, the water had turned shallow, and ahead of them a solid black wall marked the edge of the forest. The water grew shallower and they splashed the last fifty yards and so came to dry ground. Aurelia sank down wearily. "Just let me get my breath," she pleaded.

Kimlocke studied the forest, and his memory, and he said: "There's a road that follows the river south from Taylor's Landing, and it must skirt the edge of the swamp near here somewhere."

Aurelia rose to her feet instantly. He tried to push her back, but she said insistently: "No, I'm all right." She held to his arm, as though she didn't want to lose him. "It's late, and the Landing's a long way from here."

"We'll make it," he said. . . .

They'd gone less than half a mile when they came onto the road paralleling the river north and south as he suspected. They turned north up it and it was easier walking still. He started to withdraw his hand from Aurelia's; but her grip tightened, and she wouldn't let his go.

The cabin was a mile farther on. The sky overhead had cleared; the moon shone down with a brilliance that was almost like day, and they saw it in a clearing, with a shed and a stable in back.

From the road Kimlocke shouted: "Hello, the cabin! Hello!" He repeated it twice more, and there was no answer. The fourth time a light went on inside and the door opened and a man appeared with a lantern. He'd drawn trousers on over his nightshirt. He was holding a gun.

Walking in front of Aurelia, Kimlocke approached. "We were caught in the storm," he called. "Can we come in and get dry?"

The man held up his lantern, eying him suspiciously until he saw Aurelia. Then he lowered his gun and stepped aside.

Kimlocke followed Aurelia into the cabin. The man's wife was sitting on the edge of a bunk, with a blanket wrapped about her, and in another bunk were three tow-headed children. Aurelia turned and in the lantern-light she and Kimlocke saw each other clearly for the first time since their boat capsizing had thrown them into the river. She saw a barefooted man, wet and covered with mud, a man with a bloody gash over his left eye and a rent in his shirt from shoulder to trousers. He saw a girl whose hair was matted to her head, whose dress clung wetly to every line of her figure, and whose face was red with embarrassment beneath the splotches of mud.

The settler drew a curtain across one end of the room, and Aurelia stepped behind it gratefully. The wife joined her and the sound of whispering came from behind the curtain, and laughter, and once the wife came out for a towel and a pan of water.

When Aurelia stepped into the room again, Kimlocke was waiting in a pair of borrowed trousers and shirt. Aurelia wore a plain gingham dress, a size or two too large for her. She'd combed out her hair, partially drying it, and twisted it into two long braids that trailed down her back almost to her waist.

They went outside where the settler was hitching up a span of work-horses to a wagon. "He and his family are letting us have their team," Kimlocke explained, "and they'll catch a ride into Taylor's Landing with neighbors."

The settler helped Aurelia onto the seat, and his wife stood in the doorway with the three children and waved as they drove out of the yard. Kimlocke turned north up the roadway, putting the team into a fast trot. "It's two-thirty," he said, "and nine miles to the Landing. . . . Warm enough?"

"Yes," she answered briefly.

Kimlocke pushed the horses hard, and the miles fell away rapidly behind them. He had three hours to daylight. He had three hours only until settlers from all over the county began pouring into Taylor's Landing. In less than two of those hours he had to run Garth and twenty-odd men out of the settlement—if it was to be a free election.

Aurelia must have read his thoughts. "Do you think they'll be waiting for you?"

"They'll be waiting," Kimlocke said, and wished that he'd left her back in the cabin with the settler and his wife.

They came out of the forest an hour and some minutes later and saw the river in the moonlight, and a few lights that marked Taylor's Landing. When still a mile away Kimlocke left the road and cut cross-country, curving around the settlement to the river on the north side. There were lights and activity in the logging camp as he approached. Men were moving about on the bank, packing up, he saw; and he guessed they were getting ready with daylight to start the raft downriver.

Kimlocke stopped in some trees and helped Aurelia from the wagon. He'd been half-expecting her to question him on his plans; instead she suddenly said: "It isn't worth it. You'll never be able to run Garth and the Murrell men out of town."

"Then they'll have to run me out," Kimlocke replied. "Taylor's Landing isn't big enough to hold all of us today."

They came up to the hotel and stopped beside the window of Trixy's room. It was shut, and Kimlocke rapped on the glass. There wasn't any answer, and he rapped again, then pushed the window up when he discovered it wasn't locked.

The room was empty, and with a whispered, "Wait here," to Aurelia, Kimlocke climbed inside. He crossed to the door. A faint light showed down the corridor and he followed that to the lobby.

From the hall, standing back in the shadows, he looked into the whole room and saw Trixy slumped in a chair, asleep, and Loganberry pacing up and down restlessly. The tall medicine-man looked drawn and pale.

KIMLOCKE rapped on the wall with his fingers, and Loganberry whirled. He stood still a moment, before the haggard lines in his face melted, and he said hoarsely: "Kimlocke!"

It woke up Trixy and brought her out of her chair with an exclamation of joy. She ran to Kimlocke and hugged him. "We'd almost given up hope," she cried.

Loganberry pumped his hand, then asked sharply, "Where's Aurelia?"

"Here," Aurelia's voice said from the darkness down the hall. She was standing in the doorway of Trixy's room, her face white and her shoulders slumping in weariness.

Trixy embraced her tearfully. "Thank God you're safe," she said. She repeated: "We'd almost given up hope. We didn't know what had become of you."

In a few words Kimlocke described their trip down the river and through the swamp. "What happened while we were gone?"

Loganberry stopped Trixy from answering. "Don't try to cover up for me, my dear." He spoke quietly, though with an effort. He didn't leave out the incident with the Murrell men, nor his backing down before them, nor the townsmen's failure to stand behind him.

"If you'd been here, there'd have been a showdown," he said, "and we'd have cut off their ears and nailed them to the wall of the voting place."

"Where's Garth now?"

"In his room over Buck's Tavern."

"Or in the Tavern?"

Loganberry said: "I don't know. There's a light on; but nobody's gone in or out in over an hour."

"How many Murrell men have you seen in the last hour?"

"None. A couple of settlers went up the street just before you came in. Going back to the camp-site on the levee."

"We'll need Cole and Avery and their friends. That can be your job. Rout them out."

"And yours?"

"I'm going after Garth."

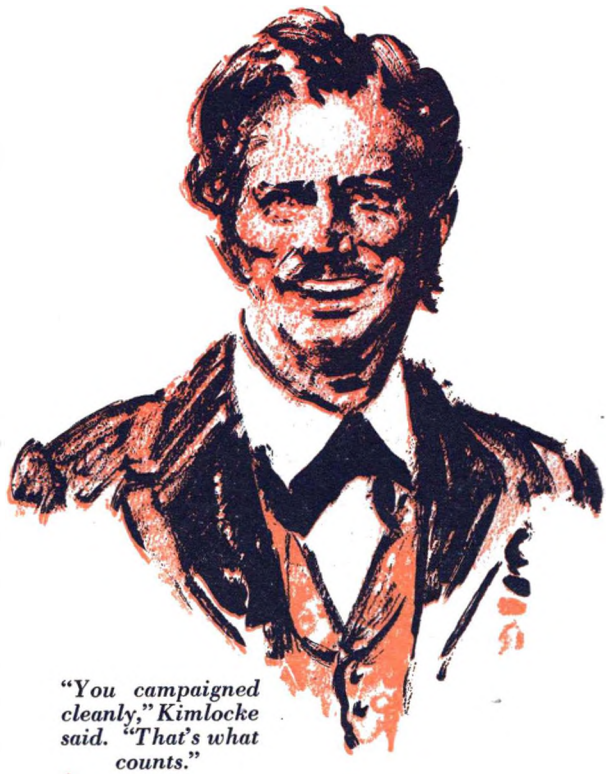
Aurelia and Loganberry started to protest, but Trixy's voice stopped them. "Nobody's going anywhere." She'd gone into her room to close and bolt her window; now she stood in the doorway behind Aurelia.

She drew Kimlocke into the room and to the window. "Look," she whispered, "over to your left; by the corner of the building."

He didn't see anything at first, just the moonlight and the wall of the building next door where it projected a yard or two beyond the hotel. The wall was in deep shadow, but as he watched, something in it moved.

"There's another one of them to the right." Trixy sucked in her breath sharply, and her fingers bit into his arm. "And look there!" Her voice was frightened now.

Kimlocke looked upriver and saw the two men come out of the clump of trees where he and Aurelia had left the wagon. They were big men in slouch hats, and moonlight shone on the rifles they were carrying.



"You campaigned cleanly," Kimlocke said. "That's what counts."

"They know you're back!"

Loganberry was peering anxiously over their shoulders. "If they're out there, they're in front too. They're all around us, aren't they, Beau? They've got us."

"Not yet."

"What about the roof?"

Trixy said: "We'd be trapped up there."

"There's an axe at the end of the hall." The idea came to Kimlocke as a faint desperate hope. "Get it."

Loganberry left the room, but was back in a minute, pressing the axe into Kimlocke's hands. "Stand back," Kimlocke said. In the faint light from the window he saw Taylor in the doorway, and Trixy and Aurelia moving away from him. He swung the axe over his head.

The first blow split the floor-board in half, and he pried it loose. He split a second and a third and opened a place in the floor big enough for a person to squeeze through. He'd remembered that the buildings along Front Street were raised on pilings. He put his arm down to make sure; there was three feet of space under it.

"Get going," he said.

He'd hardly spoken when a crash of breaking glass came from the lobby. Taylor jumped into the room; Loganberry followed and they slammed the door shut and bolted it.

Trixy was first down through the hole, then Aurelia. Loganberry followed, and Kimlocke was last.

"Which way?" Loganberry asked hoarsely.

"The feed-store," Kimlocke answered. "Cole lives in back."

He led the way. The buildings clear to the alley between Cole's and Avery's were joined together. They had to crawl on their hands and knees, in one place wriggle forward flat on their bellies. Trixy and Aurelia were uncomplaining.

They reached the alley, and Kimlocke stepped quickly to the corner and looked into the street. He ducked back. Three Murrell men were coming up the walk toward him. They were less than fifty feet away, and running.

"Kimlocke, is that you?" The voice came from behind him. "It's me—Cole."

Kimlocke saw the side door of the feed-store was open, and the black shadow of a man. "Inside," he called to Loganberry. "Quick."

They caught the urgency in his tone and obeyed swiftly. Kimlocke shoved Cole in ahead of him, closed the door just as footsteps sounded in the alley.

They were running when they passed the door. Kimlocke waited. He thought, "Damn the luck!" His plan had been to run the Murrell gang out, but here he was on the defensive. *He* was the hunted.

A minute passed, and he opened the door slowly. He looked into the alley. The Murrell men had gone. "Trixy and Aurelia, stay here," he whispered. "Have you got guns, Cole?"

Cole shoved a pistol into his hand.

"All right," Kimlocke said.

He threw all caution aside as he turned up the alley. He came out into the street at a run and started across it. To his right, down by Buck's Tavern, several torches were burning. There were men on the porch. Two were just coming out of the hotel.

THE alley ran clear through the town, and he made it into the extension across the street without being seen and ran down it in almost complete darkness. At the end of the first building he turned right through back yards, ran toward the river and Buck's.

The rear of Buck's Tavern was dark, but there'd been a light in the front. He tried the back door. It was locked. Locked and shuttered, too, were the windows.

Kimlocke dropped to his knees and crawled under the building. The tavern was quiet over his head, and in one spot a crack of light shone down through the floor boards, but as he approached the street, a murmur of voices reached his ears. It grew louder, then fell away. Bootheels pounded the walks, and the voices became distant shouts.

He lay flat under the porch, watching a slouch-hatted man standing in the doorway of Matt Taylor's hotel. Up the street, just turning into the alley by Cole's, were more. Lights had come on in a dozen buildings now as the sound of the chase roused the settlement.

Kimlocke's glance returned to the hotel. The man in the doorway had gone back in. For an instant the street was empty.

And in that instant he rolled from under the porch. He came to his feet, took the steps two at a time. In three bounds he was inside the tavern, flattening himself against the wall by the door.

A single lamp burned on the bar and his gaze swept the room. At first glance he thought he was alone. On the second he noticed the table back in the shadows of a corner. A man was seated at it, facing him. The man's hands lay on the table top in front of him. In each was a pistol.

"If you move that gun of yours," Garth said, "I'll kill you."

Kimlocke gauged his chances. His sights were pointed away from the table at nearly a ninety-degree angle. In the time it would take him to make that ninety-degree shift Garth could fire both of his pistols.

"I've been waiting for you," Garth said. "I knew when you got back you'd come looking for me."

Kimlocke listened for the sounds of Murrell men returning, but for the moment the street outside was quiet.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to put a bullet in your head," Garth went on calmly, "but unless you force me to, I don't think I will. Your father is well known and liked in the State and it might be inadvisable, politically, to be the one responsible for his son's death."

Kimlocke's gaze was on the lamp at the end of the bar. It was almost on a level with his pistol sights. If he raised the nose an inch or two it wouldn't change the angle, or be noticeable to Garth. He raised it slowly.

He pressed the trigger and for one thunderous second the tavern rocked and roared to the sound of his and Garth's shots. He had dropped to the floor and he heard Garth's bullets smash into the wall over his head. His own had shattered the lamp, plunging the room into darkness.

As the bullets thudded into the wall behind him Kimlocke sprang to his feet. In his mind's eye he saw the room in full light, and he started toward Garth's corner. He moved around a table, and upending a chair, flung it ahead of him. His groping hands found another and threw it before he leaped forward, arms outflung before him.

He met Garth coming in, and knocking Garth's knife-arm away with a savage blow, flung himself forward, grasping it with both hands at the wrist. He pressed his thumbs against the heel of Garth's hand, and pressed hand and knife back. Garth lashed out with his other hand, went halfway to his knees.

The knife clattered to the floor.

At the sound—at the feel of his opponent's fingers springing free—Kimlocke let his grip go and drove his fist up into Garth's face. He hit him two hard blows and felt a surge of satisfaction. Garth had had the advantage of an extra gun and a knife, but now they were on equal terms.

He struck Garth in the face, received a smashing blow over the eye in return. He hit out right and left in the darkness and drove Garth slowly back, until he felt Garth's body begin to sag.

Kimlocke slammed him over the ear with all his strength. Garth dropped. He hit the floor, plunging against Kimlocke's legs and almost bringing him down. Kimlocke stepped back, breathing deeply.

BUT his triumph was short-lived. He whirled at the sound of running feet, and shouting voices outside. He didn't have to look to know that the shooting had drawn the Murrell men back to the tavern; but he wasn't quite prepared for the sight of so many. The street seemed to be filled with them. There were two coming across from the hotel, four from up the street, three from the direction of the river. One was already halfway up the steps.

There was only one quick way out, and Kimlocke took it. He went out by the front door at a dead run, across the porch and down the steps at the startled Murrell man coming up. He hit him, and they both went down and rolled across the walk into the street.

Kimlocke came to his feet first and kicked the Murrell man in the jaw, knocking him senseless into the dust. The other Murrell men had paused in surprise, and it gave him the split second of advantage he needed. He sprinted around them and away up the street.

They started after him, but they took only a few steps. The reason was a welcome sight to Kimlocke: a score or more of men were coming out of the alley by Cole's. They spread in a line clear across the street, from sidewalk to sidewalk, with Loganberry and Taylor and Cole in the lead.

They started down the street, and more fell in behind them. And now more Murrell men had joined their friends in front of Buck's Tavern. A pistol went off. With a chorus of angry shouts the two factions charged each other.

Kimlocke stopped Loganberry. "Where's Aurelia?" he shouted.

"Safe," the medicine man shouted back. "Four of Taylor's friends are with her and Trixy."

The street clear to the river was a mass of fighting men now. Torches threw red light over the scene and Kimlocke saw more Murrell men and more of the townsmen rushing to join in. Some settlers stood uncertainly on the sidelines. Kimlocke turned back toward Buck's Tavern. He took a torch from a settler.

Garth was seated on the floor, holding his head in both hands. He looked up and started to his feet; Kimlocke grasped him under his arms and drew him up.

"You're on the losing end," Kimlocke said shortly. "It's about over."

And it was true. The fighting in the street didn't last long. The Murrell men were leaderless, and they gave ground rapidly before the savage, shamed fury of the townsmen. From the doorway Kimlocke watched a dozen of the Murrell men go down, saw more backed against the hotel with their hands over their heads. One ran for the river, and Avery and a dozen friends lunged in pursuit.

Kimlocke pushed Garth out onto the porch as Loganberry and Cole came up the steps. There was blood on Garth's face and clothes, a dazed expression in his eyes.

"What'll we do with them?" Cole asked.

"Run them out of town," Loganberry said.

"They'll just be back." Kimlocke shook his head. "Neither can we hold them. It would raise an issue."

"The loggers are moving their raft downriver at sunup," Cole suggested. "They're Crockett men, mostly. They'll take Garth and his gang with them, turn them loose tonight after the voting's over."

"It's a good idea," Kimlocke said, and added: "Maybe turn them loose in Black Swamp and give them a taste of their own medicine."

Matt Taylor came up the steps. He was frowning. "Some of the settlers want to know what it's all about," he said. "They're Jackson people."

Even as Taylor spoke, a lanky settler in the street shouted angrily: "What's coming off here? What's Crockett's bunch trying to do?"

A chorus of shouts rose on every side, and in the light of the flares Kimlocke saw a hundred or more faces turned up to him demandingly.

"Garth and the Murrell gang were planning to steal the election," he answered them.

"That's what you say," the lanky settler retorted. "Let Garth tell us."

Kimlocke saw the flicker of hope come into Garth's eyes. He saw the worry in Taylor's eyes, felt it himself.

"Let Garth speak," a second settler shouted.

But before Kimlocke could answer, a clear calm voice said from across the street, "Garth is no longer in a position to speak in this campaign." Clay Abbott stood on the steps of the hotel. With him were Aurelia and Trixy. "What Kimlocke's told you is the truth," he called. "Every word of it. I hereby denounce Garth and his men, and request they be run out of the Landing. This will be an orderly and free election."

Garth started forward, but Matt Taylor put a hand across his chest and pushed him back. Physically, Garth was a beaten man, but there was no sign of defeat in his eyes, or in his bearing. The same arrogance was there.

"I'll see that he and his friends are on the raft when it leaves," Taylor said.

"It won't do you any good," Garth said easily. "You're about thirty days too late, my friend."

Taylor put the point of his gun in Garth's stomach and backed him into the tavern.

Loganberry sighed. "It's been a hectic twenty-four hours, and I think I'd like to go fishing for a week or so."

"After today you can," Kimlocke promised him. "After Crockett takes the election."

Loganberry's face sobered. "*If* he takes it, you mean."

"He will," Kimlocke replied confidently.

Loganberry shook his bald head. "I don't think so. I don't think he will. I think he'll lose. Garth's done too much damage already."

Chapter Fifteen

KIMLOCKE STOOD ON THE LEVEE AND WATCHED a score of Negroes taking off the last of the cargo from the steamboat that had come in that morning from St. Louis. The packet lay broadside to the landing, its bow touching the blackened hull of the *Bayou Queen*, and while the Negroes worked at unloading, another gang brought on firewood and stacked it on the boiler deck. It was the first packet in two days, and it had failed to bring any news of the election.

Kimlocke saw Crockett up the street. The woodsman had ridden into the Landing late on election night. He hadn't said much, but Kimlocke had learned the details from Billy. Crockett, it seemed, had run into the same sort of trouble in the county that Kimlocke had in the settlement; and he'd handled it the same way Kimlocke and the townsmen had. There'd been more broken heads among the Murrell men.

Kimlocke turned away from the river restlessly, and it was then he saw Aurelia just coming out of the hotel, and went to meet her. Her uncle and Trixy had kept her in bed, and this was the first he'd seen her alone since the night in the camp.

He said: "How do you feel?"

She smiled at him. "Much better."

He took her arm and they walked along the levee toward the park. He thought of their night in the swamp and now it seemed a long time ago.

Aurelia looked at the river flowing against the bank and he saw some of her embarrassment had returned. "What're your plans?" she asked. "I understand you're going away."

He nodded. When her footsteps lagged he said. "You'll like it in the Territory." He stopped and swung her around until she faced him. "Won't you?"

Her gaze met his, then lowered.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said.

"Out there on the river with you," she answered slowly, "I was never less afraid in my life."

They walked on. "When I should have been frightened, I wasn't. When I was in the greatest danger I felt more secure then I had ever felt before in my life."

"Then you'll go with me?"

For the briefest moment only she hesitated. "Yes," she said then. "Oh, yes."

Kimlocke's hand closed over hers and pressed her fingers tightly. "We'll look the Territory over and if we like it," he said, "we can find a place to settle. I'll have the urge to roam knocked out of me by then."

"I haven't asked that," Aurelia said quickly.

"No," he answered. "I know you haven't. It's the way I want it to be."

She looked up at him gratefully. "Thank you."

They reached the park and now they were startled by the cry: "Here comes the Memphis coach!"

"That'll be the election results," Kimlocke said quietly.

Aurelia nodded and they turned and started back. River Street had begun to fill with people. Crockett and Abbott stepped out of the hotel and joined them and they moved eagerly toward the livery-stable.

Kimlocke shaded his eyes with his hand and saw the stagecoach that was just turning in the street from the road out of the forest. He saw the six horses coming in at a gallop and stepping high and the driver up on the roof with two passengers beside him and the trunks and boxes in the rack behind him.

The coach swept into town and the driver pulled his team to a walk as he neared the livery-stable where a change of horses awaited him. The coach came to a stop and there was a sudden noise and confusion as the hostlers from the stable unhitched the team and the passengers stepped out of the coach to stretch their legs and the driver tossed the mail-sacks down. All up and down the street men came out of buildings and walked near. There was a tenseness about them that Kimlocke didn't miss. They too had been waiting impatiently for the election returns. A man picked up the mail-bags and carried them into Buck's Tavern. Part of the crowd followed him. The rest stood in the street.

"Beau!"

Kimlocke turned and with a start saw his father beside the coach. Scott Kimlocke pushed through the crowd and they shook hands briefly. He took off his hat to Aurelia. Kimlocke saw the seriousness that was in his father and he felt a tightening of his muscles when he said, "Who won?"

Crockett came up and then Loganberry.

"It was close," Scott Kimlocke said. "It was so close another hundred votes would have turned the decision the other way."

"Who won?" Crockett asked sharply.

Scott Kimlocke smiled. "You did," he answered.

Kimlocke looked at Crockett and he saw the perspiration break out on Crockett's face and he saw the woodsman's face grow red; then he smiled broadly in relief. For himself Kimlocke felt swift elation.

They were all smiling suddenly, and each shook hands with Crockett. Outside they could hear a voice calling out the election results and Kimlocke went to the door. and down the steps to Aurelia. Her uncle had joined her. Aurelia's face was a conflict of emotions.

"The best man won," Abbott said without any sign of rancor. "If the circumstances had been different, and Garth and the Murrell gang had kept out of the campaign, I would have felt badly about the outcome; but I don't. I'm glad I lost. I deserved to."

"Next time you'll do better," Aurelia comforted him.

"You campaigned cleanly," Kimlocke said. "That's what counts."

Kimlocke watched the crowd as it listened to the man across the street who was reading the results from a piece of paper, and on many faces there was anger and disappointment.

The man finished reading and then the crowd swung around and faced the other way and it was then Kimlocke noticed Crockett standing on the porch of the saddle-shop behind him. He drew Aurelia to one side.

"I want to thank you one and all for your support in this election." Crockett spoke quietly. "And I want everyone of you to remember that I am your spokesman in the United States Congress, and if you have anything on your minds let yourselves be heard. While Congress is in session you can reach me in Washington, in the great District of Columbia. At all other times just drop down to the canebrakes along the Obion and we can talk over a fish-line."

A BURST of applause rose from the crowd and Crockett stepped down off the porch. Kimlocke saw Trixy pushing her way along the plank-walk and Aurelia left his side and went to meet her—and watching them, Kimlocke saw the friendly way the two girls greeted each other. He walked near and Trixy was saying, "I'm so glad for you."

Crockett came up and joined them and Scott Kimlocke came out of the saddle-shop. Kimlocke drew his father aside and when they returned the older man bent and kissed Aurelia on the cheek. She smiled and put her hand in Kimlocke's.

"So it's the Western Territory for you," the older Kimlocke said, and she nodded.

Loganberry had come up and he said sourly, "You can have the whole Western Country. My nerves won't stand any more excitement."

"The Territory needs strong men and women," Kimlocke encouraged him.

"I'm a simple vendor of medicines," Loganberry replied. "Nothing more."

Crockett laughed. "The trouble with you is that you don't know your own strength."

Trixy put her hand through Loganberry's arm and she said: "Why don't we go too?"

"No," he answered flatly. He looked at Kimlocke and Kimlocke said, "Come with us," and Aurelia said, "Oh, please."

"Not now," Loganberry replied stubbornly. "Perhaps after you've civilized the West."

"What about you?" Crockett asked Scott Kimlocke.

"There's one little bit of business to attend to here," the older man said, "then I'm off to collect a hotel and a tavern from Mr. Oran Garth."

Loganberry turned and started to walk away, but Scott Kimlocke stopped him. "That little bit of business is between you and me, my tall slippery friend. Fifty dollars' worth, to be exact. Don't you remember?"

Loganberry sighed. "I do," he admitted, "but I was in hopes you wouldn't."

THE loud bellow of the whistle sounded from the river at that moment. "The packet leaves for Memphis in twenty minutes," Kimlocke said.

"The sooner the better," his father agreed.

It took a few minutes for each to collect their belongings and meet at the landing. Clay Abbott joined them there. "I'll be going back to Washington," he said. "I'm very happy for you, my dear; and I know you'll take care of her, Kimlocke; better care than I was ever able to give her."

Loganberry shook hands solemnly and his grip was long and strong. Trixy and Aurelia kissed and they had difficulty holding back the tears. Kimlocke shook hands with Trixy, and she said, "I'll always remember you."

They went on board the packet then with some other passengers and climbed to the hurricane deck. They stood and looked ashore and now the levee was crowded with people. Someone shouted: "So long, Davy. Come back and see us!" And from every side rose cries of: "Hurray for Davy Crockett." The plank was run in from shore and a mate bellowed orders to his crew in a voice as loud as the whistle that let go at that moment with an ear-splitting blast.

Bells sounded in the packet's depths and in response her paddle-wheels moved. They turned over slowly and the packet's stern swung out into the river and she began to back away from the bank. Again the whistle roared out and was answered by another cheer from the crowd on the landing. Hands waved and handkerchiefs fluttered. Trixy and Loganberry stood at the water's edge and they alone were silent.

Bells rang again and the paddle-wheels turned and the packet swung slowly with the current and pointed her nose downstream. Kimlocke and Aurelia walked to the stern and looked back at the foaming wake. They could feel the throb of the engines under their feet, hear the cough of the exhaust over their heads. The packet was moving swiftly now and they stood and watched Taylor's Landing grow smaller and the crowd on the levee become a blur against the green wall of the forest.

Kimlocke took Aurelia's arm. They walked forward with the bright sunlight shining in their faces. They were both smiling eagerly.

WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE

Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.

ALVIN M. JOSEPHY, JR., thirty-five years old, managing editor of the Santa Monica (Calif.) *Independent,* has a background of writing for all media.

Educated at Harvard. Formerly staff member of New York *Herald Tribune.* Did foreign correspondence from Mexico and contributed to American and English magazines. (Interview with Leon Trotsky just before his assassination was widely reprinted).

Prior to war, was assistant director of News and Special Events at WOR-Mutual in New York. After Pearl Harbor, was Chief of Special Events for the Domestic Radio Bureau of the OWI in Washington. Enlisted in the Marine Corps as a combat correspondent, saw action at Guam and Iwo Jima, awarded the Bronze Star.

At Guam made a ninety-minute personal recording of wading ashore under fire. It was flown out, broadcast on all four networks and called outstanding combat recording of the war. Transcript is in my book, "The Long and the Short and the Tall," published 1946 by Knopf. Co-author also of several other books on the Corps, including "The U. S. Marines on Iwo Jima."

Came to Santa Monica, Calif., after the war as a scenario writer for MGM. Returned to newspaper business last year. Married, three children. Just sold a fiction treatment of the condor story, called "Something for the Birds," to Darryl Zanuck. It's now being prepared for shooting, and will star Paul Douglas and Anne Baxter.

Present interest: the so-called national crime syndicate and its hold on bookmaking. Have been engaged in journalistic investigation of same for nine months. Results will be book and host of articles, some already published.

Edward S. Fox

I WAS born in Mt. Kisco, New York; educated in Massachusetts, then Arizona, then back in Massachusetts again, at Harvard. I spent many years in the Southwest, along the Mexican border, so naturally used this background for many of my stories. Back in the 30's I met a girl in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and we were married a year later. We now have two children and live in Florida, where we moved on the occasion of my first sale. That was fourteen years ago. We're still here, and I guess we always will be. That's what happens when you get sand in your shoes.

Colin Lofting

I WAS born in Albuquerque in 1915. Much of my early life was spent in Europe. Father, Hugh Lofting, (author of the Dr. Dolittle stories) traveled a great deal, and while he was covering the League of Nations, for the *Herald Tribune,* I—with my older sister and mother—seemed to be constantly on the move. Unfortunately, about the only thing I can remember well was having dysentery in Spain.

My earliest ambition was to become a cowboy. Dad, believing that male children should learn to be independent, practically helped me pack, when at the age of fourteen, I went to Wyoming and started to work for the CBC —a large horse outfit—that made Ken-L-Ration. I was put on the payroll as a flunky, helping a very irritable one-legged cook. Then I graduated to wrangler. Father had to come to Wyoming, grab me by the scruff of the neck, and enroll me in the Fountain Valley School, of Colorado Springs.

I've always been nutty about horses. When I finally wound up my meager education at the Hun School, in Princeton, I was riding races, as an amateur, mostly over fences.

When I was nineteen, I worked for *Polo Magazine,* and that was my first —and up until a year and a half ago— last attempt at becoming a man of the literary world. While working for *Polo* I met Edward Conklin, a flyer, and the two of us started the Pegasus Charter Service. We operated out of North Beach—which is now La Guardia —and had a very successful service. We flew jockeys—we could get so many in the plane—from track to track.

In 1939 I was married and moved to a ranch I had bought near Missoula, Montana. During the War—in which I spent three and a half years as a gunner in the Air Corps—my wife moved back to Pennsylvania. The King Ranch bought a lot of land there (Pa.), and when I was discharged we sold our ranch and I helped develop the King Ranch holdings back here.

Writing always gnawed at me; I quit the King Ranch, wrote a story and sold it to the *Post.* It was either the luckiest —or unluckiest—break I ever had. Since then I have written a lot of stories that I haven't sold, and some that have —the *Post* has taken three in all.

I am afraid that my career is not studded with the correct things to uphold the old adages concerning hard work, etc. In fact, the highlights are such worthless things as coming *out* of a chute on a bucking horse in Helmville, Montana, and coming *to* in the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.; having lived in every State in the union, (much of this accomplished while in the Service); and being a member of a band that has so much fun playing we are excused for our musical shortcomings.

After Father's death I tried to finish a book "Dr. Dolittle and the Green Canary" that he had almost completed. It was like getting on a horse, at the head of a stretch, and trying to ride a finish for Eddie Arcaro. Dad was, and still is, one of my favorite authors. I couldn't finish the book. If some day I can write something, and tag it on to the work of my father, without there being any noticeable change in the caliber of the writing, I'll have the job (of writing) well under control.

Major Edwin H. Simmons

HE wrote "Johnny Reb's Submarines" before he left for Korea last summer. He has been at the front in combat ever since, and was awarded the Silver Star for his share in the Inchon landing. We hope for permission to print some of his letters in an early issue.

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Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction

June, 1951
25 Cents

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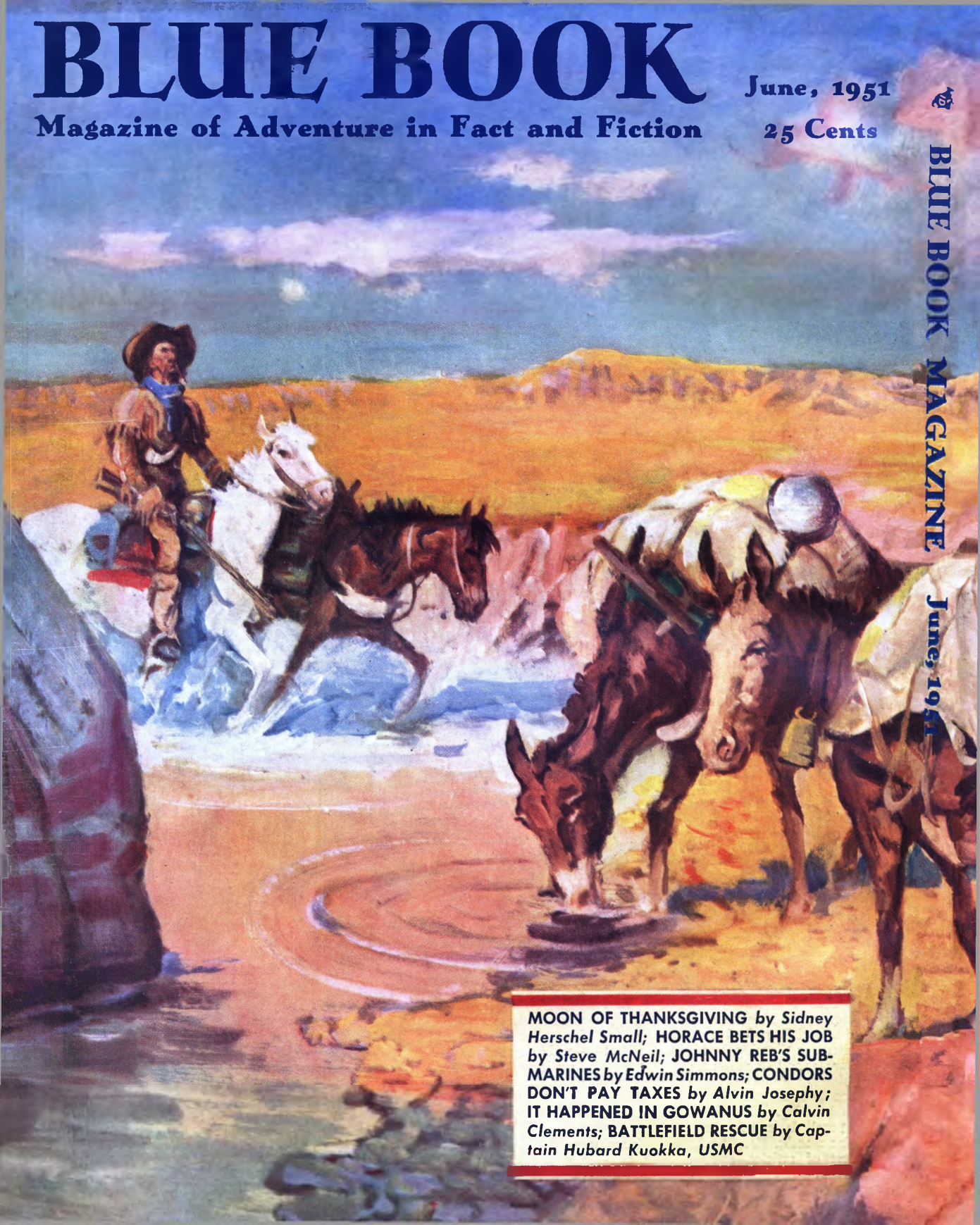

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