

Fawcett's

DEC. 25¢
IN CANADA 30¢

Battle

Stories

SPY X-44

THE INSIDE
STORY OF
AMERICAN
ESPIONAGE

by
FREDERICK
C. PAINTON



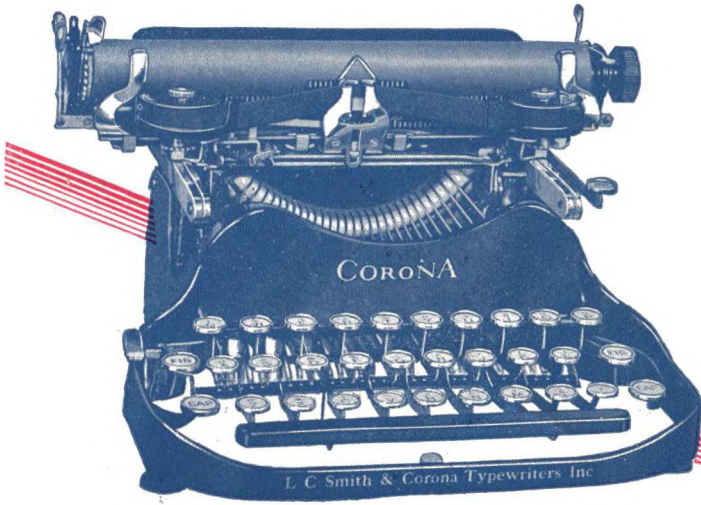
DEC. 1930



Battle Stories



25 CENTS



Only
200
 down

BRAND NEW

CORONA GENUINE Model #3

Lowest Price — Easiest Terms

HERE'S your chance to own that *brand new* Genuine Model 3 Corona you've wanted—on the easiest terms ever offered—at **LOWEST PRICE** ever offered. Complete in every detail; back spacer, etc. *Manufacturer's Guarantee*. Recognized the world over as the **finest, strongest, sturdiest portable built.**

S. Joveton writes: "It truly is a wonderful machine. I am very pleased with it and find it very simple to work although it is the first typewriter I have ever used."

Don P. Fina, composer and pianist says: "Corona has helped me put my songs over and is still doing it. I find it just the thing for writing words to songs and for all correspondence to the profession."

F. J. Barauglia, Jr., writes: "I am very well pleased with your little Corona and I must say I do not know what I would really do without it. It works like a charm and has every convenience of a larger machine."

Mrs. G. Bernstein says: "Allow me to thank you for prompt delivery of the Corona. I am delighted with it and know I shall derive great pleasure from its possession."



Yours for 10 DAYS FREE

Try this wonderful portable typewriter—the same machine that has satisfied 500,000 users. Experience the joy this personal writing portable typewriter can give you! Use it ten days free! See how easy it is to run and the splendidly typed letters it turns out. Ideal for the office desk, home, traveling. Small, compact, light, convenient. Don't send out letters, manuscripts, reports, bills in poor handwriting when you can have this Corona at such a low price on such easy terms. Remember these are *brand new* machines right out of the Corona factory.

Carrying Case Included If You Act Now!

Leatheroid carrying case, oiler, instructions free on this offer. Send no money—just the coupon. Without delay or red tape we will send you the Corona. Try it 10 days. If you decide to keep it, send us only \$2—then \$3 a month until our special price of \$39.90 is paid. Now is the time to buy. Mail coupon today!



Save Money—Use this Coupon

Smith Typewriter Sales Corp., (Corona Division)
 469 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill. Dept. C-138
 Ship me the Corona, F. O. B. Chicago. On arrival I'll deposit \$2 with express agent. If I keep the machine, I'll send you \$3 a month until the \$37.90 balance of \$39.90 price is paid; the title to remain with you until then. I am to have 10 days to try the typewriter. If I decide not to keep it, I will repack and return to express agent and get my money back. You are to give your standard guarantee.

Name _____
 Address _____
 Employed by _____



DO THIS.... If You Want to Raise Your Pay \$2,500 a Year or More!

Now—For a Limited Time Only—This Remarkable Pay-Raising Plan Will Be Sent Free To Every Ambitious Man. If You Ever Aspire To Earn \$10,000 a Year Or More, Get These Vital Facts Without Fail. See Exactly Why They Have Led So Many Men Into The Five-Figure Salary Class!

WOULD YOU RISK 2c AGAINST A POSSIBLE \$2500?

DID you ever stop to think how the decision made on the impulse of a split-second may eventually lead a man to success such as most people only dream of!

For example, when William Shore of Lake Hughes, California, stumbled upon a magazine page describing this self-same plan for raising men's pay, he was only a cow-puncher. But some inner "hunch" caused him to hesitate for a moment and read. In that instant, *the die was cast!* Today Shore is making as high as \$125 a week, with bigger and bigger prospects for the future. . . . So it was with F. B. Englehardt of Chattanooga. He, too, mailed the coupon below and was rewarded by raising his pay \$4800 a year—an increase of 200%!

Thousands of others can tell you similar experiences which occurred after they read the pay-raising book—"The Key to Master Salesmanship"—now offered to you free. . . . And if it could do *half* as much for you as it did for Englehardt—wouldn't it be worth your while and a 2-cent stamp to get a chance to look it over?

Salary Increases 200% to 900%

How did these men do it? What did this book show them? Just this:—Each of these men knew that salesmanship offers bigger rewards and delivers them *quicker* than any other line under the sun. This vital book

—"The Key to Master Salesmanship"—blasted dozens of old theories and showed exactly why scientific salesmen are *made* and not "born," as so many people have foolishly believed up to now. Not only that, it outlined a simple plan that will enable almost any man to become a master of scientific salesmanship.

Reason it out for yourself. Salesmanship is just like any other profession. City and traveling sales positions are open in every line all over the country. For years, thousands of leading firms have called on the N. S. T. A. to supply them salesmen. Employment service is free to both employers and members and thousands have secured positions this way.

Free to Every Man

See for yourself WHY "The Key to Master Salesmanship" has been the deciding factor in the careers of so many men who are now making \$10,000 a year. You do not risk one penny nor incur the slightest obligation. And since it may mean the turning point of your whole career, it certainly is worth your time to fill out and clip the blank opposite. Send it now!

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION
Dept. W-263, N. S. T. A.
Bldg., Chicago, Ill.



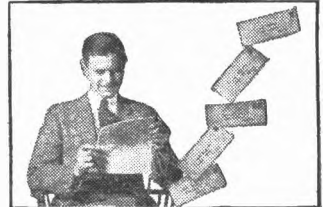
THE FIRST STEP

Amazing things have happened as a result of mailing the coupon below. For example, when M. Barichlevich, of San Francisco, Calif., mailed it, he was a restaurant worker at \$8 a week. Today his salary has skyrocketed to \$125 a week.



SEE FOR YOURSELF

The coupon will bring you a FREE copy of what has been called "the most amazing book ever printed." It reveals facts that have led legions of ambitious men to success through the highest paid profession in the world!



FREE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

This man-building volume not only shows you an astonishingly simple way to master the ins-and-outs of scientific salesmanship, but also explains the N. S. T. A. free employment service. Requests for over 50,000 trained men were received last year.



REAL MONEY AT LAST

If you want to raise your pay \$2500 or more, you owe it to yourself to see exactly why this remarkable book increases men's earnings so surprisingly. You'll never find a better way to invest a 2c stamp than in mailing the coupon below! Do it now!

National Salesmen's Training Assn.,
Dept. W-263, N. S. T. A. Building,
Chicago, Illinois.

Without cost or obligation you may send me your free book, "The Key to Master Salesmanship," and tell me about your Free Employment Service and other features of the N. S. T. A.

Name

Address

City State.....

Zip.....

CAPT. W. H. (Billy) FAWCETT, Publisher
CAPT. ROSCOE FAWCETT, Editor

Fawcett's



Battle

Stories

December,
1930

Vol. VII No. 40

Dedicated to the fighting forces of the United States and Canada, whose gallant daring and deathless courage have always distinguished their deeds on land and sea or in the sky.

An Authentic Spy Novel

Your Introduction to this Amazing Novel 27

Spy X-44 FREDERICK C. PAINTON 28
True exploits of an American spy are the basis for this thriller.

Two Action Novelets

Red Sabers of the Steppes CAPT. H. G. FRY 66
Sergeant Flynn leads his saber-swingers on the Siberian front.

Terrence X. O'Leary of the Rainbow Division ARTHUR GUY EMPEY 140
A gripping synopsis makes this final instalment a complete novelet.

Air—Sea—War

The Mad Gunner L. B. McNICOL 57
Dynamite Dugan goes A. W. O. L. from the hospital to the action front.

The Suicide Sub HAROLD BRADLEY SAY 103
New torpedo lanes are blazed in the treacherous North Sea.

Ride 'Em Doughboy! MALCOLM DOUGLAS 111
A pint-size buck drops infantry tactics for cavalry methods.

Bomb Patrol GIL BREWER 125
The wildest flight of all—a bombing raid without bombs.

Traitor Wings HERBERT L. McNARY 164
Allied pilots are caught in the backwash of German intrigue.

My Most Thrilling Experience

Holding the Bridge at Bois Roger SERGEANT S. R. H. EVANS 134
Winner of the \$50 prize in this month's contest.

Battle Stories Specialties

Fire Step 8 Funk Hole 174
Steel-Ribbed Armies 102 Trading Post 176

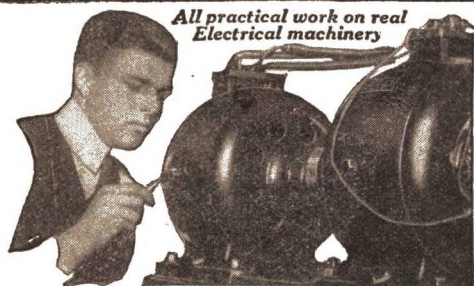
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Illustrations by George C. Smith

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Other Fawcett Magazines are: Modern Mechanics and Inventions, Triple-X Western, Screen Play, Hollywood, and Mystic Magazine.

Get Into One Of These BIG PAY FIELDS



All practical work on real
Electrical machinery

Amazingly Easy Way to Get Into ELECTRICITY

Don't spend your life waiting for \$5 raises in a dull, hopeless job! Let me show you how to make up to \$60, \$70 and even \$200 a week, in Electricity — NOT BY CORRESPONDENCE, but by an amazing way to teach that makes you a practical Expert in 90 days!

LEARN WITHOUT BOOKS IN 90 DAYS

No Books! No Lessons! You learn by doing actual electrical work right here in the Coyne Shops. You are trained on huge motors, generators, switchboards, transmitting stations, power plants, auto and airplane engines, etc. You don't need advanced education or previous experience. You qualify for real electrical work in 90 days!

Earn While You Learn

Don't worry about a job! You get FREE life-time Employment Service. And don't let lack of money stop you. If you need part-time work to help pay living expenses, I'll help you get it. Coyne is 31 years old. Coyne Training is tested. You can find out everything FREE. Just mail coupon below and I'll send you my BIG FREE ELECTRICAL BOOK, telling all about jobs—salaries, etc. This does not obligate you. Just send the coupon below!

MAIL THIS COUPON FOR BIG FREE ELECTRICAL BOOK..

H. C. LEWIS, PRESIDENT
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 90-05
500 S. Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen: Please send me your big Free Electrical Book, with 151 illustrations. This does not obligate me.

Name

Address

City.....State.....



Student working on Television
transmitter in
Coyne Radio Shops

Learn RADIO TELEVISION TALKING PICTURES

Every branch of Radio is calling for trained men! 5,000 Service Men needed at once. Big call for Wireless Operators, both at Sea and in the Air. Many jobs open in Broadcasting Stations. Talking Picture and Sound Experts in great demand. And now Television is on the way! Soon there'll be a demand for thousands of Trained Men in this one branch alone. Say "good-bye" to \$25 and \$35 a week—get into Radio, where thousands of jobs are open, paying \$60 a week and up.

Not By Correspondence By Actual Work—in 8 Weeks

Come to Coyne and learn Radio in 8 weeks! NOT BY BOOKS OR CORRESPONDENCE, but by actual Radio work on actual Radio equipment — on scores of Radio receivers, huge Broadcasting equipment, the very latest Television transmitters, Code Practice apparatus, Talking Picture and Sound equipment, etc. No experience needed. You learn all branches of Radio in 8 weeks.

FREE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

After you graduate, I'll help you get the Radio Job you want — and if you need part-time work while at school, I'll help you get that, too. Coyne has been training men since 1899. Let Coyne train you for a Big Pay Radio job! Mail coupon below for a copy of my BIG FREE RADIO BOOK, telling all about Radio, Television, Talking Pictures, Wireless, etc. This costs you nothing. Just mail coupon below.

MAIL THIS COUPON FOR BIG FREE RADIO AND TELEVISION BOOK

H. C. LEWIS, PRESIDENT
RADIO DIVISION, COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 90-3A, Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: Send me your Big Free Radio Book and all details of your Special Introductory Offer. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name

Address

City.....State.....



This Queer Little Automatic Device Protects My Car From Thieves **ELECTRICALLY!**

I have hit on something truly amazing. Since the first discoveries of radio, I know there has been nothing so startling and uncanny. My little secret device guards every part of your automobile from spare tire to headlights and steering wheel. In your garage or on the street it is on the job 24 hours a day. Never sleeps, rests or gets tired. Already approved by insurance companies and motor associations. Now offered on 5-day test.

Puzzles Everyone!

THIS little, automatic "electric-watchman" invention is called "Devil-Dog." It is not only a new kind of device, it is an *entirely new idea!* Absolutely unique and utterly different than anything anyone ever saw before. So startling that it grips the imagination of everyone from the millionaire Rolls-Royce owner to the fellow who drives a second-hand Ford. Until he knows the secret every motorist will swear that you have some one hiding in your car. He just simply can't believe there can be such a device as this queer "electrical-watchman."

INSTALLED IN 10 MINUTES— COSTS NOTHING TO OPERATE

Every man who owns a car can afford Devil-Dog. Actually, no man who owns a car can afford to be without this inexpensive protection. Last year over 116,000 automobiles were stolen in this country. Millions of dollars' worth of spare parts were pilfered by sneak thieves. Now Devil-Dog can be installed by anyone in ten minutes or less. There

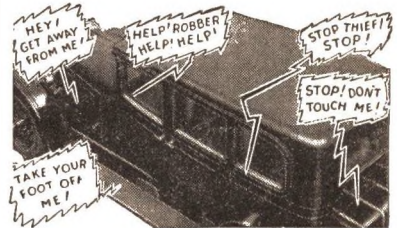
is absolutely no cost for operation. No extra batteries to buy. It will last as long as the car. And you hide the secret switch button anywhere you want to around your car. It's nothing but common sense for a man to grab Devil-Dog the very first time he sees it demonstrated. No wonder distributors already are cleaning up young fortunes!

5-DAY FREE TEST

I invite readers of this magazine to send for the special 5-day test offer now being made on Devil-Dog. Test it. Show your friends. If your present income is less than about \$50 a week, profit opportunities as my spare-time or full-time representative may surprise you. My one condition is, I want men to help me *quick!* Write me today!



NORTHWEST ELECTRIC CORP.
Dept. W-510, Pukwana, So. Dak.



RECORD EARNINGS—\$138 IN A DAY!

Every Devil-Dog sale brings you a real profit. No penny-ante little business! That's another reason Devil-Dog is a *real* big money maker! G. Oliver, Illinois representative, reports, "Made \$138 in a day. This is the easiest way to make money quick I ever heard of. My next order will be for 1,000." That's the top record so far. Who will beat it first?

POLICE BUY FOR ARMORED CAR

Richard Jacques, Canada, just started, writes, "Here's our order for 24 Devil-Dogs. I have sold one to the police for their armored car. Am also getting letters from the Chief of Police and the Detective Department. Tomorrow we demonstrate to the motor league."

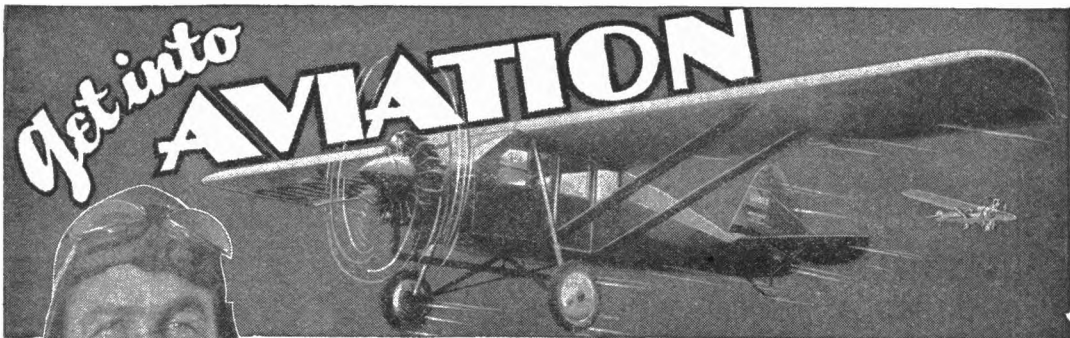
**Northwest Electric Corp., Dept. W-510,
Pukwana, S. Dak.**

Rush territory details and your 5-day test offer without obligation.

Name

Address

Town State.....



**Major Rockwell
Famous War
Flyer Who Will
Train You**

Major Rockwell is a veteran air man who has grown with Aviation. Since the early beginning, during the war, to the present day, he has had a prominent part in the development of the industry. He is now devoting his entire time to teaching Aviation. He will train you for a position in this great new industry as only a Veteran Flyer can. Under Major Rockwell's guidance your future in Aviation is certain.

**Glider Course
No Extra Cost**

To all students who enroll now we will include a Glider Course without extra charge. This course has been prepared in accordance with the correct principles of glider construction and operation and is a very valuable addition to your knowledge of Aviation. Enroll at once and get the Glider Course.

Only Trained Men Quickly Qualify in Aviation

The big money in Aviation does not go to the novice or apprentice. Only TRAINED men can command the high salaries. Employers are glad to pay big money for men who know Aviation—builders, mechanics, service and maintenance men, and flyers. Let me prepare you for one of the many high salaried Aviation jobs open to the trained man. I will prepare you to take your place in the most fascinating, fastest growing industry in the world. Rush this coupon to me for a copy of my famous free book.

MONEY BACK AGREEMENT

I am so sure that you can learn Aviation with my help and step into a good aviation job that if you are not satisfied when you have finished my course, I agree to return every penny of your tuition.

MAJOR ROB'T L. ROCKWELL

THE DAYTON SCHOOL OF AVIATION
Desk Z-53 DAYTON, OHIO

**"I Will Train You At Home
LEARN TO EARN
\$300 to \$400 a Month"**

I offer you this easy, quick way to get into Aviation. There is a need for trained men, and this is your opportunity to enter this uncrowded, fascinating field with a bright future.

In A FEW SHORT MONTHS

Just devote about an hour a day to my Home Study Course, and in a few short months you can master the principles of Ground Training, which are necessary before you take your

No Advance Education Necessary or Experience Needed

You don't need to have a high school or college education to master my course. You do not even need to know anything about airplanes, motors or mechanics. My home course is thorough and complete. Everything is so clearly explained, with easy-to-understand text and pictures, that in a few short months you will be able to grasp every fundamental principle of Aviation ground

**You Learn Principles of Aviation at Home
Then Choose Any One of 40 Ground Jobs.
My Home Study Course All You Need**

When you have completed the ground training I will arrange for you to take your flying instruction at any licensed airport near your home at special reduced rates. Or if you want you can come here to Dayton and get training at a fine well-equipped airport. No matter where you learn to fly you can qualify for a pilot's license and a high pay flying job in passenger lines, mail service, and other important branches of

place in any branch of Aviation. In a few short months I will give you practical aviation training and prepare you for one of the better pay jobs open to men thoroughly trained in Aviation.

work and you will be well on the road to qualify for an important aviation job, that will later on lead into a job paying \$300 to \$400 a month. My Home Study Course will give you all the knowledge necessary to pass the government's written examinations for mechanics' or pilots' licenses.

**EMPLOYMENT
SERVICE**

After you graduate I assist you in getting a job without any cost to you. Right now the demand for trained men is greater than the supply. A place is ready for you!

**Get My No-Risk Plan
My Big Book
Explains ALL
I'll send it FREE**



Major Rob't L. Rockwell
The Dayton School of Aviation
Desk Z-53, Dayton, Ohio.

Dear Major:—Please send me FREE and without obligation a copy of your famous book on Aviation; also your tuition and position offer.

Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ State _____ Age _____

The Fire Step

Bursts and Duds by the Editor



By Captain ROSCOE FAWCETT, editor. Formerly of the Artillery, Infantry and Air Service of the Regular Army.

AS TOP-CUTTER on this magazine which is dedicated to the fighting forces of the United States and Canada I'll always find space for a good word for

Dig Deep for the Red Cross the annual American Red Cross drive for financial support.

American troops permanently stationed in China, the sailors on board our cruising vessels and the Marine posts in the tropics are constantly in touch with the American Red Cross as well as are civilians and soldiers in United States barracks.

The Red Cross Roll Call, a yearly drive for funds, is scheduled for November 11-27 and those of you with a vivid memory of the days Over There will not be slow in responding to this call for aid.

++

CHARLES R. HOWLAND, commanding officer of Fort Francis, Wyoming, speaking before the annual convention of the Colorado reserve officers,

Army Officers Take Oath of Poverty

made a statement to the effect that army officers are so poorly paid that they can't support a family.

There is nothing new in the situation and it has long been an established fact that to take the oath as an officer in the standing army is equivalent to taking the oath of poverty.

In war time no expense is too great for the defense of our country and we, as citizens, eat sugar substitutes and save our prune pits so that more money will be available for that purpose.

Sooner or later the importance of peace-time preparedness and the need of keeping the same high class of men in the service as are gracing it now, will lead to a wage scale for army officers that is in accordance with their ability and qualifications. May that time come soon! The present situation is a disgrace to the country that will be defended by her manpower in case of war.

++

ONE of the very admirable tasks accomplished by President Hoover is his signing of the congressional resolution for a commission to study the question of conscripting wealth and industry, as well as men, in time of war.

Drafting the War Profiteer Meat packers, oil companies, sugar concerns and clothing manufacturers are a few of the buzzards that feasted on the bones of the dead during the last war. Adroit maneuvers of capital stock and other so-called "big business" allowed them to boost their profits to a distorted ratio.

Of course signing the resolution doesn't mean that in case of immediate war, all industries will be put under government control. But at least it is a step in the right direction—straight at the heart of the slimiest of all creatures, the war profiteer. The investigation will move on in its own sweet, slow way but time may see its culmination in a profitable and fair plan.

Roscoe Fawcett

I will train you at home

to fill a

BIG PAY Radio Job!



Here's Proof



\$100 a week

"My earnings in Radio are many times greater than I ever expected they would be when I enrolled. They seldom fall under \$100 a week."
E. E. WINBORNE,
1414 W. 48th St.,
Norfolk, Va.



Jumped from \$35 to \$100 a week

"Before I entered Radio I was making \$35 a week. Last week I earned \$110 servicing and selling Radios. I owe my success to N. R. I."

J. A. VAUGHN
3715 S. Kingshighway,
St. Louis, Mo.



\$500 extra in 6 months

"I find I made \$500 from January to May in my spare time. My best week brought me \$107. I should have taken it long ago."

HOYT MOORE
R. R. 3, Box 919,
Indianapolis, Ind.

If you are earning a penny less than \$50 a week, send for my book of information on the opportunities in Radio. It is free. Clip the coupon NOW. Why be satisfied with \$25, \$30 or \$40 a week for longer than the short time it takes to get ready for Radio.

Radio's growth opening hundreds of \$50, \$75, \$100 a week jobs every year

In about ten years Radio has grown from a \$2,000,000 to a \$1,000,000,000 industry. Over 800,000 jobs have been created. Hundreds more are being opened every year by its continued growth. Men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you—are needed continually.

You have many jobs to choose from

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay \$1,800 to \$5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually need testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to \$15,000 a year. Shipping companies use hundreds of Radio operators, give them world wide travel at practically no expense and a salary of \$85 to \$200 a month. Dealers and jobbers employ service men, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay \$30 to \$100 a week. There are many other opportunities too.

So many opportunities many N. R. I. men make \$5 to \$25 a week extra while learning

The day you enroll with me I'll show you how to do 10 jobs, common in most every neighborhood, for spare time money. Throughout your course I send you information on servicing popular makes of sets; I give you the plans and ideas that are making \$200 to \$1,000 for hundreds of N. R. I. students in their spare time while studying.

Talking Movies, Television, Wired Radio are also included

Radio principles as used in Talking Movies, Television and home Television experiments, Wired Radio, Radio's use in Aviation, are all given. I am so sure that I can train you satisfactorily that I will agree in writing to refund every penny of your tuition if you are not satisfied with my Lessons and Instruction Service upon completing.

64-page book of information FREE

Get your copy today. It tells you where Radio's good jobs are, what they pay, tells you about my course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. Find out what Radio offers you, without the slightest obligation. ACT NOW.

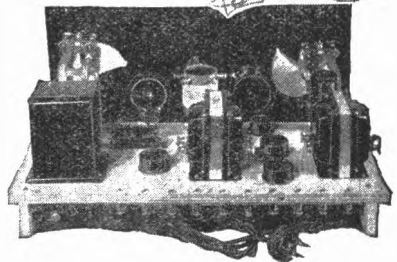
**J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute Dept. ON9
Washington, D. C.**



I will give you my new 8 OUTFITS of RADIO PARTS for a home Experimental Laboratory

You can build over 100 circuits with these outfits. You build and experiment with the circuits used in Crosley, Atwater-Kent, Eveready, Majestic, Zenith, and other popular sets. You learn how these sets work, why they work, how to make them work. This makes learning at home easy, fascinating, practical.

Back view of 5 tube Screen Grkl A. C. set—only one of many circuits you can build.



I am doubling and tripling the salaries of many in one year and less Find out about this quick way to

BIGGER PAY



FILL OUT AND MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

J. E. SMITH, President,
National Radio Institute, Dept. ON9
Washington, D. C.
Dear Mr. Smith: Send me your book.
This request does not obligate me.

Name

Address

City State

Lifetime Employment Service to all Graduates



**WANT
A
STEADY
GOVERNMENT
JOB?**



**\$1260 TO \$3400 A YEAR
MEN—WOMEN 18 to 50**

U. S. Government Positions are steady. Strikes, poor business conditions, lockouts or politics do not affect them. U. S. Government employees get their pay for twelve full months every year. There is no such thing as "HARD TIMES" in the U. S. Government Service.

TRAVEL—SEE YOUR COUNTRY

Railway Postal Clerks get \$1,900 the first year, being paid on the first and fifteenth of each month. \$79.00 each pay day. Their pay is quickly increased, the maximum being \$2,700 a year. \$112.50 each 15 days.

PAID VACATION

Railway Postal Clerks, like all Government employees, get a yearly vacation of 15 working days (about 18 days). On runs they usually work 3 days and have 3 days off duty, or in the same proportion. During this off duty and vacation, their pay continues just as though they were working. When away from home they get extra pay for hotel expenses. When they grow old, they are retired with a pension. Spring examinations are expected.

CITY MAIL CARRIERS—POST OFFICE CLERKS

Clerks and Carriers commence at \$1,700 a year and automatically increase \$100 a year to \$2,100 with special increase to \$2,300. They also have 15 days' paid vacation. City residence is unnecessary. Many February examinations expected.

GENERAL CLERKS—FILE CLERKS

(Open to men and women 18 and over)

Salary \$1,260 to \$2,500 a year. Pleasant clerical and file work in the various government departments at Washington, D. C., and throughout the country.

WHAT IS YOUR FUTURE?

Compare these conditions with your present condition, perhaps changing positions frequently, kicking around from post to pillar, no chance in sight for PERMANENT employment;

frequently out of a position, and the year's average salary very low. DO YOU EARN \$1,400 TO \$2,700

EVERY YEAR? HAVE YOU ANY ASSURANCE THAT A FEW YEARS FROM

NOW YOU WILL GET \$2700 OR

MORE A YEAR?

YOU CAN GET A POSITION

Country residents and City

residents stand equal

chance. Experience is

unnecessary, and po-

litical influence

is not used.

Write to me free of charge

(1) a full description of the

position checked below; (2) Free

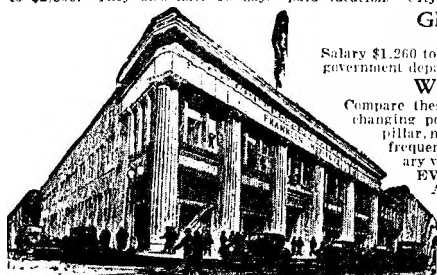
copy of 32-page illustrated book

"How to Get a United States Gov-

ernment Job"; (3) A list of the United

States Government Jobs now obtainable.

MAIL COUPON TODAY



GET FREE LIST OF POSITIONS. Fill out the coupon. Tear it off and mail it today—now, at once. This investment of two cents for a postage stamp may result in your getting a Life Time Government Job.

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. R-300

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Name

Address

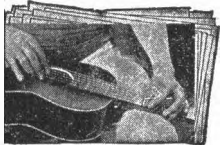
Use This Coupon Before You Mislay It—Write or Print Plainly.

16 the first night for playing!

MOST of the world works for a living—works hard, too. But that doesn't mean **you** have to. Why not **play** for a living? Do something you like to do, and make it pay you big money. Plenty of men and women who had a hard time to get along six months ago—are now making from \$50 to \$100 a week—playing their Hawaiian Guitars. And they didn't know how to read a single note of music when they came to me.

America's Most Popular Music

The haunting, soft, melodious strumming of the Hawaiian Guitar is America's most popular music. Everywhere orchestras are looking for men and women who can play the Hawaiian Guitar. Everywhere those who have mastered the Hawaiian Guitar are getting paid more and more money. Roy Reikane writes in, "I have made \$200 extra money in 6 weeks playing my Hawaiian Guitar." Carlton E. Scarbro recently wrote me, "I have made \$1,000 since I took your course." Granville Smith writes, "I make \$8 a night and play only 4 hours."



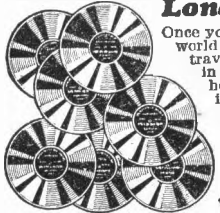
One of the Dozens of Photos helps sent with each Course

Hundreds of such letters have come in. But let me tell you about my short-cut to good times and big pay—my simplified method of learning to play the Hawaiian Guitar at home in a few weeks. A new method—so easy to understand—so much fun to learn—that even a child can pick it up. (We have successfully taught children only 8 years of age.)

Pictures Instead of Words, Teach You

I don't care if you have never read a note in your life, or don't know what a Hawaiian Guitar looks like. All I ask is that you like music. My methods are so clear and easy to understand that you will actually play a real melody after the very first lesson. Sounds unanny, doesn't it? Here's how I do it.

With your lessons I send dozens of photographs showing just how to place your fingers, how to strum the strings. My Know-All and Master charts teach you to read notes almost automatically. It's as simple as learning your A B C's over again. Some of our students become finished musicians the first month, others take a little longer, but they all learn with surprising speed.

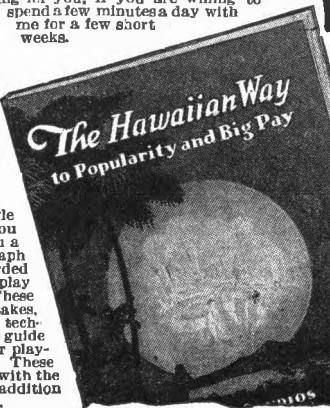


We Send You Regular Phonograph Records of Every Piece in the Course

And we don't miss a single bet. To make sure that you can't go wrong, we send you a whole set of regular phonograph records, on which is recorded every melody you learn to play while taking the course. These aid you to correct minor mistakes, and assure you of perfect technique. With these records to guide you—the tiniest error in your playing is quickly corrected. These records come absolutely free with the course and are an excellent addition to your home music as well.

Lonesome? It's a Sure Cure!

Once you have mastered the Hawaiian Guitar, the world lies waiting at your feet. You can travel anywhere, meet the best people, live in real style and comfort, and gain a host of friends. All this is yours, waiting for you, if you are willing to spend a few minutes a day with me for a few short weeks.



This is what Prutzman Did

"A friend asked me if I could play the Hawaiian Guitar. I told him I'd only been playing for a few weeks, but he said, 'Come along anyway, and play at the dance.' I made out very well, and was paid \$16 for my first night's work. And I see more opportunities ahead." —RALPH PRUTZMAN, Lehigh-ton, Pa.

We Give You this Genuine HAWAIIAN GUITAR WORTH \$20



Send for FREE BOOK IT SHOWS YOU HOW

Everything is explained. Every last bit of proof is given you. It shows you just how you can master the Hawaiian Guitar at home in double-quick time. How you risk absolutely nothing to learn. How I send everything you need.

Get on the road to Big Pay and Pleasure Today. Write Now!

A. F. Bloch, President, Hawaiian Studios, 841 20 of New York Academy of Music, 100 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Without obligation, send me FREE Book "The Hawaiian Way to Popularity and Big Pay," with facts on how I can make BIG MONEY, spare-time or full-time.

Name..... Age...
Address.....
City and State



Speechless...When a Few Words Would Have Made Me!

But now I can face the largest audience without a trace of stage fright

THE annual banquet of our Association—the biggest men in the industry present—and without a word of warning the Chairman called on me to speak—and my mind went blank!

I half rose from my seat, bowed awkwardly and mumbled, "I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me today," and dropped back in my chair.

Speechless—when a few words would have made me! The opportunity I had been waiting for all my life—and I had thrown it away! If I could have made a simple little speech—giving my opinion of trade conditions in a concise, witty, interesting way, I know I would have been made for life!

Always I have been a victim of paralyzing stage fright. Because of my timidity, my diffidence, I was just a nobody, with no knack of impressing others—of putting myself across. No matter how hard I worked, it all went for nothing—I could never win the big positions, the important offices, simply because I was tongue-tied in public.

And then like magic I discovered how to overcome my stage fright—and I was amazed to learn that I actually had a natural gift for public speaking. With the aid of a splendid new method, I rapidly developed this gift, until, in a ridiculously short time, I was able to face giant audiences—without a trace of stage fright!

Today I am one of the biggest men in our industry. Scarcely a meeting or banquet is held without me being asked to speak. My real ability, which was hidden so long by stage fright, is now recognized by everyone. I am asked to conferences, luncheons and banquets as a popular after-dinner speaker.

This amazing training has made me into a self-confident aggressive talker—an easy, versatile conversationalist—almost overnight.

No matter what work you are now doing nor what may be your station in life; no matter how timid and self-conscious you now are when called upon to speak, you can quickly bring out your natural ability and become a powerful speaker. Now, through an amazing new training you can quickly shape yourself into an outstanding influential speaker, able to dominate one man or five thousand.

In 20 Minutes a Day

This new method is so delightfully simple and easy that you can not fail to progress rapidly. Right from the start you will find that it is becoming easier and easier to express yourself.

Thousands have proved that you can not fail to progress rapidly. Right from the start you will find that it is becoming easier and easier to express yourself. Thousands have proved that you can not fail to progress rapidly. Right from the start you will find that it is becoming easier and easier to express yourself.

Send for this Amazing Booklet

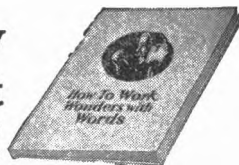
This new method of training is fully described in a very interesting and informative booklet which is now being sent to everyone

mailing the coupon below. This booklet is called *How to Work Wonders with Words*. In it you are told how this new, easy method will enable you to conquer stage fright, self-consciousness, timidity, bashfulness and fear. Not only men who have made millions but thousands of others have sent for this booklet and are unstinting in their praise of it. You are told how you can bring out and develop your priceless "hidden knack"—the natural gift within you—which will win you advancement in position and salary, popularity, social standing, power and real success. You can obtain your copy absolutely free by sending the coupon:

What 20 Minutes a Day Will Show You

- How to talk before your club or lodge
- How to address board meetings
- How to propose and respond to toasts
- How to make a political speech
- How to tell entertaining stories
- How to make after-dinner speeches
- How to converse interestingly
- How to write better letters
- How to sell more goods
- How to train your memory
- How to enlarge your vocabulary
- How to overcome stage fright
- How to develop self confidence
- How to acquire a winning personality
- How to strengthen your will-power and ambition
- How to become a clear, accurate thinker
- How to develop your power of concentration
- How to be the master of any situation

Now Sent FREE



NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
3601 Michigan Ave.
Dept. 1129 Chicago, Illinois

North American Institute
3601 Michigan Avenue
Dept. 1129, Chicago.

Please send me FREE and without obligation my copy of your inspiring booklet, *How to Work Wonders with Words*, and full information regarding your course in Effective Speaking.

Name

Address

City State.....

This Man is Wanted in 48 States



NO matter where he goes—this man will always be “wanted”. The size of the reward offered gives you an idea of *how much* he is “wanted”. He is “wanted” by aircraft manufacturers, “wanted” by airport managers, “wanted” by hundreds of other concerns in the Aviation Industry. \$75,000 (or more!) is the price they will be glad to pay—not for him but to him, for his services, over a period of years! They want his brains, his knowledge of aircraft and Aviation in general . . . the knowledge he gained through practical *home-study*. He devoted part of his spare time—time most men of his age waste—to preparing himself for a future in Aviation. When opportunity knocked on his door he was ready . . . and the other fellows weren't! That's why he's *wanted!*

You'll be WANTED too ---When you have this Practical Training

You have thrilled to the roar of motors overhead . . . you've probably watched the beehive-like activity at an airport . . . and wished you were part of it. You've watched fliers and envied them . . . wished you were one of them. There isn't a red-blooded young man in the country who hasn't.



FREE BOOK

But if you've ever tried to get a job at an airport, in an aircraft factory or in any part of the industry—then you know how hard it is for the untrained “green-horn” to “break-into” Aviation. Fortunately there is an easy and inexpensive way to get your Aviation training. Walter Hinton has made it so by condensing the important facts, the basic and fundamental knowledge, the technical training on motors, plane construction, navigating, etc., *in a complete home study Course of instruction.* If you want to take advantage of the unlimited opportunities Aviation offers, get the facts about Hinton-Training NOW!

If you are over 16---and serious about wanting to get into Aviation write for this FREE BOOK

In “Wings of Opportunity” a big FREE book, Walter Hinton tells you all about the splendid opportunities awaiting *trained* men in Aviation—and how to make the most of them. This free book brings you all the facts and tells how to get into Aviation quickly and inexpensively. It tells how, when you are ready, Hinton's Employment Dept. will help you get a job. Mail the coupon today . . .right now!

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of U. S. A., Inc.**

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Please send me a free copy of your book, “Wings of Opportunity,” telling how I can get into Aviation.

311-T

Name _____ (Print clearly)

Address _____ Age _____
(Must be over 16)

City _____ State _____

FREE— RUN YOUR —FREE DeVry Movie Machine

Send No Money—We Trust You



In accordance with our aim to be first in giving the best we are now offering a Genuine QRS DeVRY Projector. This model is not a flimsy toy construction, instead it is built with Mechanical Sturdiness that will appeal to Dad (who can also use this machine when company comes).

This QRS DeVry Projector is so different, so far outclasses the Toy Machines that are now offered that we would not attempt to compare the two. It really compares favorably to the real high price machines and has most of the parts exactly that the high priced machines have.

Projects Perfect Pictures

On all high price machines selling from \$50.00 to \$100.00 the precision film Claw movement is used. This is what feeds the film and is necessary for steady perfect projection. This precision film claw movement is very expensive yet the QRS DeVRY machine we are offering has this feature. In addition the important working parts, gears, etc., are MACHINED (so they won't wear out) while those of toy machines are stamped out and won't last long. Another important feature is the Spring Film Gate that is used on this machine to hold the film firmly in position, so that no matter what speed you decide to turn the crank the film will not slip out of position and will project perfectly same as at low speed.

MACHINE FULLY GUARANTEED

The QRS DeVry Co. one of the largest makers of MOVIE MACHINES guarantees satisfaction. Never before has this machine been offered on this plan. ROBERT MORE IS ALWAYS FIRST WITH THE LATEST.

Here's How to Get This Machine

GIVEN for selling only 20 bottles Liquid Perfume at 15c each (a perfume novelty free with each bottle) and remitting as fully explained in Premium catalog.

ROBERT MORE CO., Dept. H-45, Chicago

Natural Motion of Screen

With the QRS DeVRY machine the motion on the screen is as natural as with high price machines, yet the principles are so simplified that a child can operate it. The illumination is furnished by a 110 Volt 60 Watt G. E. Milltype Mazda Lamp which we furnish with the machine; unlike most low priced projectors this lamp has a set filament directly OPPOSITE the lens thus giving 100% illumination. The projection lens and optical system being made by DeVRY needs no other recommendation. Its the best. This machine provides for rewinding film.

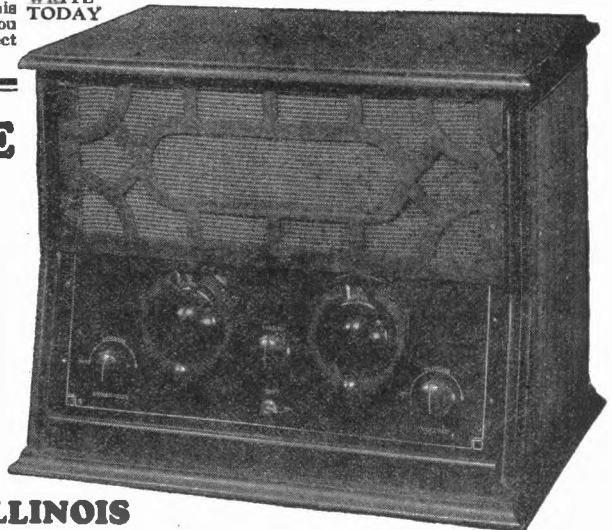
Film Sources Unlimited

The film used is 16MM (Narrow Gauge) one foot of which is equal to 2½ feet of standard film. This is the same film used in all Home Movie Projectors. You can rent, buy, borrow favorite releases and we also direct you where you can secure free use of films.

WRITE TODAY

GIVEN — 6-TUBE RADIO SET

Nationally known set licensed under RCA patents. Gorgeous Cabinet, size 17x22x13 inches. Regular retail price \$60.00. GIVEN for selling 20 bottles liquid perfume at 15c a bottle (perfume novelties free with each bottle) and remitting as explained in Premium Catalog sent with Perfume. Write today, now—Send no money—we trust you.



ROBERT MORE CO.

DEPT. H-45, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Seven Age Pains Caused By Tiny Gland Say Physicians



Thousands of men past 40 suffer loss of strength and the other ailments shown here and often blame approaching old age. Many medical men claim that 65% of men past a certain middle age are victims of a grave ailment, called prostate gland decline.

Now, an amazing drugless treatment has been perfected that directly reaches this gland. So startling has been its results that a large business institute with offices in America and England has arranged to distribute it to every sufferer. Already, over 100,000 men have tested and proved it. Some even 60 and 70 report quick relief and return to normal activity. Some say they felt 10 years younger in 7 days. This amazing treatment has proven such a success that it is endorsed and used by many physicians, hospitals, sanitariums and specialists. It is not a medicine, drug, massage, exercise, diet or violet ray. It is as safe and easy to use as combing your hair. So many thousands of letters are pouring in from users who tell of a new joy of living that it has been decided to send it on a guarantee that if it does not make you feel 10 years younger in 7 days you pay nothing.

Daring Book FREE!

The prostate gland is such a vital factor to the happiness and health of middle age men that a daring book of startling facts has been prepared at great expense. It is called "The Destroyer of Male Health" and contains intimate information that may mean new health and joy to you. Just mail the coupon for a Free Copy and details of trial offer. Address

W. J. KIRK, President

2936 Morris Ave.

Stuebenville, Ohio.

Foot and Leg Pains
Many users of this new drugless treatment say relief from distressing leg and foot pains is swift and lasting.

Sleepless Nights
Many men have been forced to get up 2 to 10 times a night report amazing sound sleep and every night with this new...

Mental Fatigue
Reports from men who suffered the distressing symptoms show new mental power, ability and cheerfulness.

Backache
Some users say they enjoyed noticeable relief overnight and that relief is complete and lasting.

No Pep
Many users write of a new joy of living—new physical power since using this amazing gland treatment.

Headaches
Men who suffered for years and tried glasses and other treatments report freedom from severe headaches now.

Nervousness
This affliction can be exterminated quickly after the prostate gland starts again to function properly.



W. J. Kirk, President,
2936 Morris Ave., Stuebenville, Ohio.

Send Free Copy of your daring book: "The Destroyer of Male Health" and facts about your trial offer. No obligation to me.

Name

Address

City State

If you live West of the Rockies, mail your inquiry to The Electro Thermal Co., 303 Van Nuys Bldg., Dept. 29-N LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Who Can Get Me Out ?



I'll Pay \$8,000.00!

Come to my rescue—QUICK! I'm HOPELESSLY LOST in these treacherous, trackless catacombes. I've tried for hours to find the right path to freedom but here I am right back in the middle again.

Can You Find the Right Path?

Will you try? A THOUSAND THANKS!—I knew you would. But first, let me warn you that *THERE IS ONLY ONE PATH* to freedom and it's—Oh! so hard to find. It starts in the middle where I am and, WITHOUT CROSSING ANY OF THE WALLS, it ends somewhere on the outside of these terrible catacombes. I hope YOU can find THE RIGHT PATH to get me out. If you do, mark it plainly with pen or pencil and send it to me quick. IF CORRECT, I'll see that you are qualified at once for an opportunity to win as much as \$2,320.00 cash out of the \$8,000.00 IN REWARDS that I'm going to give away.

\$1,000.00 Cash Just For Being Quick!

Yes, I'll positively pay ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS cash to the first prize winner, just for being prompt and duplicate prizes in case of ties. IT'S ALL FREE! Anyone may try for nothing, so send YOUR answer today. Rush it!

L. SHULMAN, 37 West Van Buren Street, Dept. 577, CHICAGO, ILL.

Here's Amazing Weatherstrip for Complete In This Tube

New Metal \$1⁵⁰ a Window Ready To Tack On!

Now, homes can be weatherstripped for \$30 instead of \$130! Now, one window or fifty, sold in ready-cut units at \$1.50 per window. Labor cost entirely eliminated. Anyone can tack it on without removing window. RED-D-PLY is all metal—finest bronze—cleverly designed on a revolutionary new principle that makes weather stripping windows and doors as simple as A-B-C. RED-D-PLY is wonderful news for America's home-owning millions and it opens up fortunes for salesmen in an entirely new field where opportunities are unlimited.



SALESMEN WANTED FOR BIG-MONEY OPPORTUNITIES

AT LAST, real metal weatherstripping that can be sold in unit packages! Now salesmen can get their share of the millions spent for weatherstripping. Red-D-Ply offers you up to \$5000 a year in quick, easy cash profits—and another possible \$5000 from automatic repeat business.

A NEW PRINCIPLE

Red-D-Ply is made of genuine spring bronze, ready-cut holes punched clear through, no raw edges, hemmed, and ready to apply. One edge is tacked flat against the frame of door or window. The other edge floats free, maintaining a spring pressure on the door or window, thus closing the crack. So cleverly are these strips constructed that anyone can weatherstrip a window in thirty minutes or less. You do not have to remove anything to apply it.

PAYS FOR ITSELF IN FUEL SAVED

Every year Red-D-Ply saves \$30 to \$60 in fuel bills alone. Stops cold air in winter—keeps hot air out in summer. Ends window rattles, and stops dust, soot and rain that leaks in around every window and door.

LOW PRICE — SELLS EASILY

Put up in neat packages, with nails and instructions and priced at \$1.50 a window. That's cheaper than felt! Compare it with metal stripping which costs up to \$10 a window!

The field is absolutely new for salesmen.

Red-D-Ply

The Metal Weatherstrip You Can Tack On



Sales of \$1.50 to \$35 per Home!

The low price is revolutionary. The repeat business is unlimited. Seldom, if ever, have salesmen had an opportunity such as is now offered to you with Red-D-Ply. Figure it out for yourself!

A PERMANENT GROWING BUSINESS

You have a chance to sell at least one or two units to every man or woman who owns a home. Even these simple sales mean cash profits to you of up to \$100 a week. But that is only the beginning of the story. You can sometimes go back a week later and sell units for every window in the house. One man tells another. You can sell everyone in a block. Repeat business easily doubles your earnings. On top of this you can sell big quantity orders to schools, hospitals and public buildings of all sizes. You often make a good week's pay in a single day. Walter Vernohm, St. Louis, earned \$142.00 in one day. That's why \$5000 a year is possible for hustlers. The longer you work the easier it is. You go right on making big money in the same territory, and every year your earnings should get bigger and bigger.

MAKE FREE SALES TEST

Write today for our free sales test offer. We furnish everything. No capital required. No big investment. Let us show you how to test this proposition without risking a penny. Simply mail the coupon. It will bring you one of the greatest opportunities ever offered to salesmen.

The Red-D-Ply Co.,

1531 Washington Avenue, Dept. W-142, St. Louis, Mo.

The Red-D-Ply Co., Dept. W-142,
1531 Washington Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Gentlemen: Send me your 10-day Test Offer and all details of your \$5000 opportunity with Red-D-Ply.

Name

Address

City State



When Writing to Advertisers, Please Mention Fawcett's Battle Stories

What sort of a girl is your sweetheart?



(Fox Films)



DO you want to discover the true character of your sweetheart—or your wife? Or yourself? If you do and are prepared to answer the questions Doris Webster and Mary Alden Hopkins have prepared in *Mystic Magazine*, you can find out in the December issue. You will be surprised at the accuracy of the tests.



In the DECEMBER issue of

Now
on sale

MYSTIC MAGAZINE

25c

Additional contents in the MOST AMAZING MAGAZINE ever published—



Tea Leaves Tell Your Fortune—Numerology—Free Consultations—Handwriting—Astrology—Telepathy—How a Medium Talks With the Spirits—Adventures in Crystal Gazing—Spirit Drawings—True Mystic Experiences.

If your newsdealer is sold out send 25c (stamps or coin) to Mystic Magazine, Fawcett Publications, Inc., 529 S. Seventh Street, Minneapolis, Minn., and a copy of the December issue will be mailed to you immediately.



“But I Thought That Book Was Suppressed!” Gaspes Bess!

“How On Earth Did You Ever Get It?”

If Gloria Swanson, Gene Tunney and the Prince of Wales had suddenly walked into the room, arm in arm, it couldn't have created any more of a sensation! Tom sat up with a whistle of astonishment—while Bess and Jane looked as though they could hardly believe their eyes!

“Decameron Tales!” cried Bess with a gasp as she read the title. “Why, that’s the book that has been tabooed so long, isn’t it? Where in the world did you get it?”

“Let me see it,” begged Tom as he laughingly tried to take the book out of my hands. “I’ve heard that it was so hot they had to put asbestos covers on it to keep people from getting their fingers burned!”

Jane pretended to look prudish but I knew she was dying to get a peek at the book just as all the others were. Suddenly an idea struck her.

“Nonsense,” she said, “Helen’s only fooling us. That couldn’t be ‘Decameron Tales.’ She’s only found a paper jacket from a real copy somewhere and put it on another book to get our curiosity aroused. I’ve heard of it for years—but it’s practically impossible to get hold of a copy!”

“That’s where you’re all wrong,” I cried triumphantly. “This is really Decameron Tales and it isn’t suppressed, although I had never been able to get it in stores. Listen to this announcement I clipped out of a magazine the other day and you’ll see how I got this copy. It says:

“Perhaps no other book has ever had a more amazing background than the Tales from the Decameron by Boccaccio! Written with such utter frankness as to be absolutely startling, these tales have long been a storm center of controversy and persecution. Critics have acclaimed them with unstinted praise for their sparkling vividness—while puritanical reformers, aghast at the way Boccaccio has exposed human life and love in the raw, have resorted to every possible means to keep this masterpiece from general circulation.

“But all that was yesterday! Today the thrill that awaits the reader within the glowing pages of Decameron Tales is no longer denied you. The world is becoming more and more broad minded—so now the peerless masterpiece of genial old Boccaccio is coming into its own at last! Read it if you wish—and decide for yourself, whether or not it should be banned or censored!”

A Mystery No Longer!

You’ll never know life until you’ve read this greatest of all once-

tabooed books! You’ll never know how utterly stark and vivid a picture of human passions can be painted in words until you’ve feasted on these fascinating tales from the greatest of all true-to-life books—the immortal Decameron of Boccaccio!

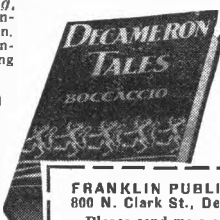
Between its pages, the thrill of a lifetime of reading awaits you. Few writers have ever dared to write so intimately of the frailties to which the flesh is heir. But the flaming pen of Giovanni Boccaccio knew no restraint. Sophisticated and fearless to the ultimate degree, his stories are not only brilliant fiction of the most gripping variety—but also the most illuminating record of life in fourteenth century Italy ever penned. Hardly a detail of these stirring times escaped his ever watchful eye—and what he saw, he wrote, without hesitation or fear!

Rich in fascinating plot, tense with action, and vibrant with human passion—the Decameron has furnished plots for the world’s great masters of literature. Longfellow, Keats, Dryden, Chaucer, and even the great Shakespeare himself sought these immortal pages for inspiration. Thus the stories not only amuse and entertain, but constitute a landmark of literature which must not be passed over if you would broaden your vision—make yourself truly cultured.

Send No Money—5 Days’ Trial

And now we are enabled to offer you this remarkable book—thirty-five of the best stories from the famous Decameron—for the amazingly low sum of \$1.98! Send no money—just fill out and mail the coupon below. When the package arrives pay the postman \$1.98, plus few cents postage. Inspect this great book for five days, then if you are not delighted return it and your money will be refunded.

Mail the coupon this instant before this low price offer is withdrawn.



Franklin Publishing Co.
DEPT. W-380
800 North Clark Street, Chicago, Ill.

FRANKLIN PUBLISHING CO.,
800 N. Clark St., Dept. W-380, Chicago

Please send me a copy of The Tales from the Immortal Decameron by Boccaccio. When package arrives, I will pay postman only \$1.98, plus a few cents postage. If not delighted, I am at liberty to return the volume within five days and my money will be refunded.

Name

Address

City State

If you may be out when the postman calls, enclose \$2 with coupon and we will pay all delivery charges. Customers outside U. S. must send cash with order.



READ!

—how a certain noble lady slipped into her husband’s chamber by stealth and changed places with his mistress in order to win back his love!

—how a tiny mole on a woman’s breast condemned her to death and wrecked three lives!

"I will give you nerves of steel and muscles like iron"



George F. Jowett.

Champion of Champions

I was once a weakling. But I craved to be strong. I increased my chest from a puny 32 inches to 47 inches. I built up my weight to 200 pounds; my neck to 18 $\frac{3}{4}$; my biceps to 18; forearms to 15 $\frac{3}{4}$; wrists to 8 $\frac{3}{4}$; thighs to 26; my calves to 17. What I did for myself I can do for you. I will give you muscles like mine. I will make you a two-fisted fighting man with nerves of steel and muscles like iron. I will send the good red blood surging through your veins like the onrush of electricity and I will do this in only 90 days. I will build you a new body that every man will envy and I will make you feel like a lion ready to tackle anything—ready to fearlessly conquer any feat of strength, because I will give you the "know-how," endurance and muscles so that you just can't fail.

Famous Athletes Endorse My Methods

My methods are endorsed by physicians; by Herman Gerner, strongest man in the world; Arthur Dandurand, the Canadian Sandow; Arthur Gay, winner of first prize in America's Most Perfect Man Contest; and Jim Londres, the famous wrestler.

Ask any of these men about my system and they will tell you there is no bunk about it. They will tell you that George F. Jowett plays the game square. I value that reputation more than all my medals—more than all my records and cups. The reason why my system never fails is very simple. My lessons build without strain. They build from the inside out. They put new life and vitality into your internal organs as well as in your biceps. I'll make you fast and enduring, as pliant as a whip, and as strong as a steel trap.



Pair of Dumbbells Free

To every person who takes my course I will give a pair of the patented Jowett Progressive Disk Dumbbells. They cannot be equalled for workmanship and muscle building. Here's another point—my course is laid out personally for each pupil. Every week you receive a new set of exercises in order of progression. You get Twelve Courses covering the Twelve Principles of Life and on conclusion of your course receive an emblem as a graduate of the Jowett Institute of Physical Culture. I guarantee to build you over in 90 days or return every penny you have paid me. My easy payment plan provides a way for every person to be a Jowett pupil.

Get My Big Free Book

I do not ask you to take my word for a single thing. All I ask is that you let me present the facts to you first because if you do I am sure that you will become one of my students and soon join the large army of real muscle men I have made who have nerves of steel and muscles like iron. Send for my big free book. You'll get a real kick out of it, because of the many photographs it contains and because it shows how easily you, too, can have nerves of steel and muscles of iron. Snap to it, buddy, and get the coupon below into the mail now, before you forget. Remember there is no obligation—the book is absolutely free and yours to keep.

RUSH THE COUPON TODAY!

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Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your illustrated booklet, "Nerves of Steel—Muscles Like Iron."

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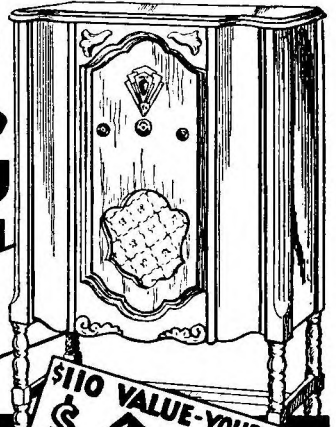
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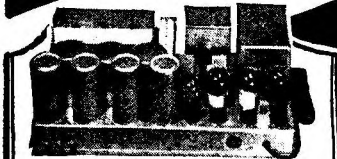
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The circuit of the New Knight 8 Screen Grid is the *hair of years* of experience in radio manufacture. Replete with an amazing array of advanced features representing the peak achievement in all-electric radio.

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New 1931 Screen Grid Tone Control A. C. Humless All-Electric Sets, Public Address, Phono-Combination, Dynamic Speakers, Beautiful Consoles. Also battery operated sets.

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You will be surprised at the remarkable radio bargains and unusual values offered in this book. All the latest features priced to give you remarkable savings.

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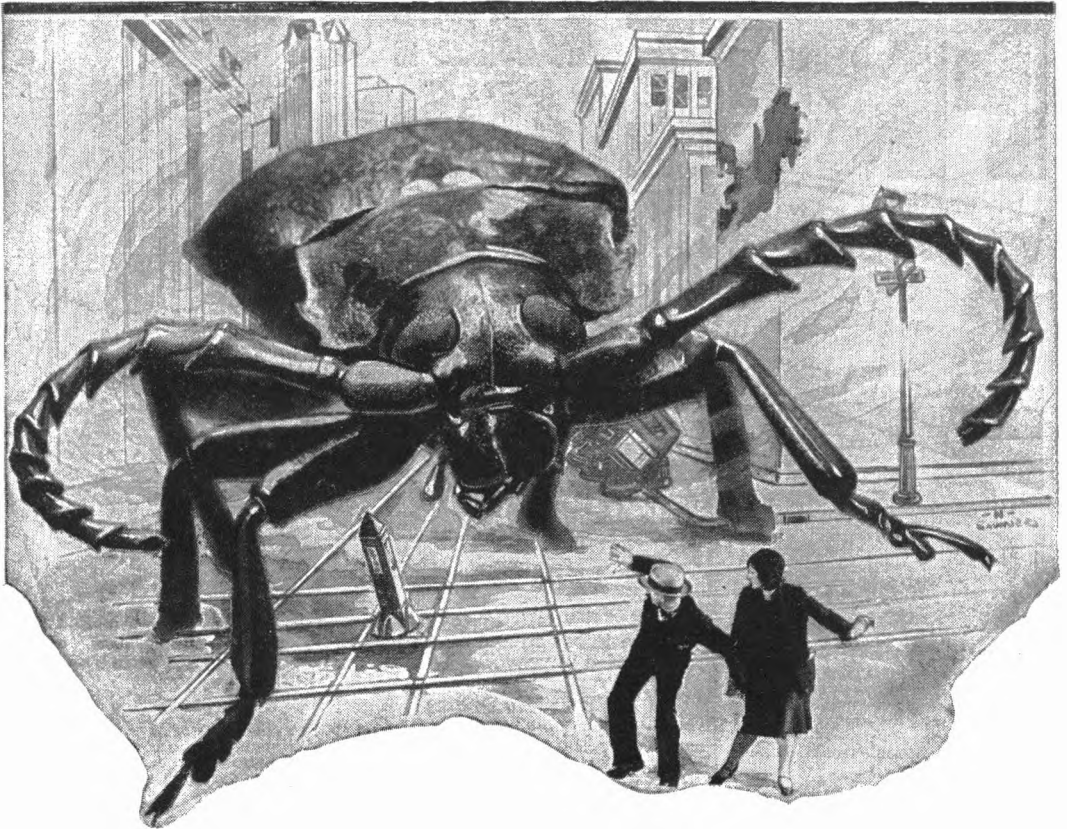
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IMAGINE the terrifying possibilities of monster beetles, grown to gigantic proportions through changed world conditions, sweeping through city streets like horrible engines of destruction! Long a favorite situation of a certain school of fiction writers, the possibility is not so fantastic as it sounds. The reasons why scientists consider it not improbable that insects will some day inherit the earth are set forth in a brilliant article in the December MODERN MECHANICS AND INVENTIONS.

This is only one of a host of fascinating features, including the personal story of Rube Goldberg, famous cartoonist, who tells how he has made a fortune through nutty inventions, none of which have ever worked.

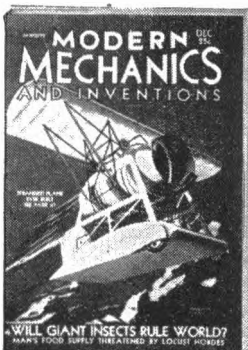
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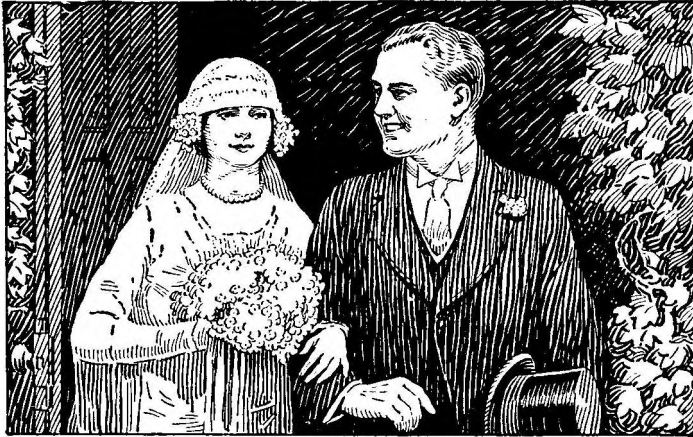
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If your newsdealer is sold out, send 25 cents to Fawcett Publications, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., and a copy of the December Modern Mechanics and Inventions will be mailed to you at once.





“The Happiest Day of My Life!”

“OUR WEDDING DAY! A year ago it seemed like a dream that would never come true, for my salary then was barely enough for *one* to live on. I faced the facts. Unless I could make more money I had no right to keep Ruth waiting. I must find out how to make myself *worth more*.

“It was Ruth herself who showed me the way. She clipped a coupon out of a magazine and we sent it to the International Correspondence Schools for information about their courses. Within a week I had enrolled. The training I got from studying at home showed up almost at once in my office work. They gave me more responsibilities. Inside of six months I was

promoted, with a substantial raise. Now I’m getting double what I was a year ago—*and we’re married!*”

Employers everywhere are on the watch for men who want to get ahead, and are willing to prove it by training themselves to do some one thing well. I. C. S. Courses have given thousands the special knowledge they need to win better jobs and bigger pay. *Why not you?*

One hour of spare time a day, spent in I. C. S. study, will prepare you for the position you want, in the work you like best. Find out how. It won’t obligate you in the least to ask for full particulars. Do it now—*for HER!*

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INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS, Box 5077-H, Scranton, Penna.
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Without cost or obligation on my part, please send me a copy of your 48-page booklet, “Who Wins and Why,” and tell me how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I have marked an X:

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City State Occupation

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I'll Show You a Quick Way to Get Money to Pay Your Bills



"VAN"
The man who is loved by thousands who have used his almost magical plan to get money to pay their bills.

If you will look after my business in your locality. No experience needed. Pleasant, easier work, can be handled in spare time or full time. Work pays good money by hour or week.

No Capital Needed

I have money enough for both of us. I furnish all capital, set you up in business, advertise you, and do everything to make you my successful and respected "partner" in your locality. I will divide with you—give you part of every dollar we take in—yet I don't ask you to invest a single penny in a stock of merchandise. Everything is furnished without risk to you. You simply call on old and new customers and prospects, give them a message from me, follow my trial order instructions, take care of mailing their orders and you make a profit on every one.

Money Comes Quick

Money comes quick this way. If you are in debt today or need money for food or clothes or rent or for any other bills here is the quickest way I know of for you

and have a **STEADY INCOME** the rest of your life

to get as much as you need. I send you a plan by which you either make \$15 cash the very first day you work for me, or else I pay you cash for the time it took you to try.

Either Man or Woman

Doesn't make any difference about your age or whether you are a man or woman. Both have made lots of money with me. All that I ask is that you will be honest with me with the merchandise I send you—that you be ambitious enough to deliver the little message I send to people in your locality and mail me their trial orders. The products are high grade everyday necessities—used in every home—such as teas, spices, extracts, groceries—things people must have to live.

Your Groceries at Wholesale

As my "partner" you can choose all your own groceries at wholesale from a big list of over 500 items. And the quality of every product is backed by a \$25,000 bond.

Four BIG THINGS I DO for YOU AT ONCE

DO I MAKE GOOD? READ THESE!

You Paid the Mortgage on My Home

Says Rev. C. V. McMurphy of Alabama, McMurphy got "Van's" offer. The first afternoon he made \$30. He writes, "The notes on the house have been burned—we have a new car—no longer fear financial problems." He has made as high as \$300 in a week.

Mother Makes \$2,000 Spare Time

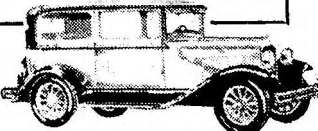
Mrs. S. M. Jones of Georgia, mother of four, says "First hour and half made \$36.47." She could only work on Mondays and Saturday afternoon. But with this easy work she has made over \$2,000 in a few short months.

\$1,457 in Prizes

Besides big earnings every day, says Wilbur Skiles, Pennsylvania. He says, "It is easy to make \$15 a day—I have made as much as \$15.23 in two hours."

Big Money in Spare Time

C. C. Miner, Iowa, made \$71 his first four days—part time. His first 15 days (part time) he made \$200. He writes, "Van, I thank God for the day I signed up for you."



Chrysler Car to Producers—No Charge
I give you a car to use in business and for pleasure just as soon as you qualify as one of my steady producers. No contest.

1. I Send You \$18 Worth of Food Products [Retail Value]

To start you right I send a big case of my products—over 32 full size packages—which you can turn into money at once if you wish.

3. I Give You 20 Magic Words and Other 20 Instructions

You simply say these words to ten ladies—give them a message from me—give them the perfume Free—and allow them to pick a trial order from your samples.

2. I Give You 10 Bottles of Perfume for you to GIVE AWAY FREE!

This perfume is absolutely Free. You pay nothing for it. You give it away with no strings—just hand it out as I show you how.

4. Then if you Don't Make \$15 Cash the Very First Day I Will Pay You a Cash Penalty for your Time

AND I go one step further—for I let you give credit to your customers and give you a part of every dollar we take in.

I don't let you take any chances. I have started over 30,000 men and women on the road toward ending their money worries. And I give you my solemn promise that I'll give you the same cooperation and the same plan that enabled them to earn from \$3.00 up to \$15.00 a day—and some have made as high as \$100.00 in a day. I give my "partners" premiums of furniture, clothing, household furnishings and even give cars to those who stay with me and satisfactorily build up their territories.

You Can Have Money in Your Pocket

Mail this coupon tonight—right now—I'll answer right away. I'll send my big portfolio and tell you exactly what to do to have money in your pocket next week. Remember I don't send anything C.O.D. It won't cost you a penny now
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THE HEALTH-O QUALITY PRODUCTS CO.

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Health-O Bldg.
Cincinnati, Ohio.

or any other time to get my plan. This is an opportunity that may not come again soon as your territory may be taken up any day. But if you want to get into the big money class at once on my wonderful new plan, write your name in the coupon now and mail it to me at once.

C. W. Van De Mark, Pres.

The Health-O Quality Products Co.
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Health-O Building
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Without cost or obligation to me send full details of your amazing big Four-Point partnership plan. This costs me nothing.

FREE FOOD PRODUCTS COUPON

Name

Address

City State.....

"HEY! Get up and give a real pianist a chance!"

One of the Boys Shouted

... but when I started to play they didn't want me to stop



BEFORE our school party at Helen White's was many minutes old a funny thing happened.

I was chatting with some of the boys when I heard my name called out across the room.

"Jim, you're a red-hot 'talkie fan'—can you hum the theme song that's so popular from Gloria Swanson's latest picture? Helen wants to know how it goes and I can't remember it to save my life.

"Sure, Harry, I know the one you mean—wait just a minute and I'll go over and play it for you."

"Play it!" exclaimed Harry. "Why we'd never be able to recognize the tune. Whistle it if you can't hum."

"Oh, it will sound much better on the piano," I replied as I sat down and began to finger the keys.

finally I had to beg for an intermission. Then the third degree began.

"Put one over on us, didn't you, Jim?" said Harry. "You're certainly the last person at the party I thought could play. How about letting us in on the secret?"

My Story

"Have you ever heard of the U. S. School of Music?" I asked.

A few of my friends nodded. "That's a correspondence school, isn't it?" they exclaimed.

"Exactly," I replied. "They have a surprisingly easy method through which you can learn to play any instrument by mail in just a few months without a teacher."

"It doesn't seem possible," someone said.

"That's what I thought, too. But the Free Demonstration lesson which they mailed me on request so opened my eyes that I sent for the complete course.

"It was simply wonderful—no laborious scales—no heartless exercises. My fear of notes disappeared at the very beginning. As the lessons came they got easier and easier. Before I knew it I was playing all the pieces I liked best."

Then I told them how I had always longed to sit down at the piano and play some old sweet song—or perhaps a beautiful classic, a bit from an opera or the latest syncopation—how when I heard

others playing I envied them so that it almost spoiled the pleasure of the music for me—how I was jealous because they could entertain their friends and family.

"Music was always one of those never-to-come-true dreams until the U. S. School came to my rescue. Believe me, no more heavy looking-on for me."

* * *
This is not the story of just one isolated case. Over half a million people have learned to play by this simple method. You can, too. Even if you don't know one note from another you'll grasp it in no time. First it

tells you how to do a thing—then it shows you how in pictures—then you do it yourself and hear it.

You teach yourself—right at home—without any uninteresting finger exercises, tedious scales or other humdrum methods.

Free Booklet and Demonstration Lesson

To prove how practical this course is, the U. S. School of Music has arranged a typical demonstration lesson and explanatory booklet which you may have free. They show how anyone can learn to play his favorite instrument by note in less than half the time and at a fraction of the cost of old slow methods. The booklet will also tell you all about the amazing new *Automatic Finger Control*.

Don't delay—act at once—fill in and mail the coupon below today—no obligation whatever. (Instrument supplied if desired, cash or credit.) U. S. School of Music, 3512 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

U. S. School of Music
3512 Brunswick Bldg., New York City

Please send me your free book, "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," with introduction by Dr. Frank Crane, Free Demonstration Lesson and particulars of your easy payment plan. I am interested in the following course:

Have You
..... Instrument?

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

The Guests Get Nervous

"Never mind, Jim," said Helen apologetically, "forget the tune, besides we're all ready to start dancing."

"Hey, get up and give a real pianist a chance," chirped in a male voice.

That was my signal to let loose. Without paying further attention to their wise cracks, I broke into the theme song that they had requested.

You could have heard a pin drop. I only wish I could have seen their faces for I knew that I had given them quite a surprise.

They Want More

"Keep it up—that's great," shouted Harry as I finished.

"Yes, please don't stop," pleaded Helen.

"I thought you were in a hurry to dance," I replied.

"You bet we are—and we want you to play for us."

No second invitation was needed. I played every number that they placed before me and if they had had their say I would have been playing until morning. But

PICK YOUR INSTRUMENT	
Piano	Violin
Organ	Clarinet
Ukulele	Flute
Cornet	Saxophone
Trombone	Harp
Piccolo	Mandolin
Guitar	Cello
Hawaiian Steel Guitar	
Sight Singing	
Piano Accordion	
Italian and German Accordion	
Voice and Speech Culture	
Drums and Traps	
Harmony and Composition	
Automatic Finger Control	
Banjo (Plectrum, 5-String or Tenor)	



**"It's a fact. . . .
six months ago I
couldn't play a note!"**



**"But now I'm making \$75 a week and
I'll bet you'd trade places with me in a minute!"**

I'VE JUST LICKED HARRY THOMPSON.

Our "fight" started way back in grammar school. Harry always seemed to *get* what he wanted—have all the friends and all the good times. I never was able to catch up with him in anything.

Harry and I have always been friendly, you understand—but I envied him.

Six months ago the town newspaper came out with the headline, "Local Boy Makes Good"—telling how Harry was going to Europe to study textiles for the mill here.

But how about *me*? I had been laid off. Having nothing else to do, I was reading a magazine at home when I found an advertisement that had possibilities. It claimed that I could learn to play the Tenor Banjo at home, in a few short months—become popular, make more money.

I sent the coupon for a Free Book. When it came, I thought it over carefully, and finally sent in my enrollment.

The first lesson came and was fascinating! With it I received a handsome Tenor Banjo. I had never had one in my hands before—but simply holding it seemed to tell me that at last I had found my own private "key to success."

Within an hour after unpacking my Banjo, I was playing a simple tune. Then I turned to another marvelous feature—the Phonograph Records of each number, played by a famous Tenor Banjoist. I checked up immediately on the lesson I had learned, corrected my mistakes—and knew that I finally had both feet square on the right road at last!

Almost before I knew it, I was actually coaxing some downright "hot"

music out of my Tenor Banjo. My few friends simply couldn't get enough of my playing!

A month later Bob Chase signed me on to play with his Serenaders. Seventy-five an evening three nights a week, \$22.50 a week extra money for me! I was walking on air. Then we got the contract here at the hotel. My salary jumped to \$75.00 a week.

But last Saturday night was the climax. About ten o'clock who should come in but my old rival—Harry Thompson. Though I knew that at last I'd stepped ahead of him, there was still one thing that worried me. With him was Ruth Martin. Everyone had always said—"Ruth is a great girl all right. But she's a little stand-offish—she's waiting for the right man to come along."

I watched her dancing. What wouldn't I give for a chance to tell her what I had always thought about her!

At last we stopped playing. The evening was over. Bob Chase, my boss, came over to me with my pay envelope for the week. "Good work, Jerry!" he exclaimed, "keep up the pace, and there'll be a raise in there later on."

But I still was thinking about Ruth. Then I saw her—she was pulling Harry over *my* way! "That was great, Jerry!" she greeted me warmly; "I never had any idea you could play that way!"

"To tell you the truth, Ruth," I replied—"six months ago I didn't even know one note from another! But now," I added, meaningly, "I have *almost* everything my heart desires!"

. . . . and I know from her look when I said "almost everything"—that I can dare hope for *everything*, now!

* * * * *

Send the coupon below for *your* copy of the Big FREE Book, "The Play-Way to Popularity and Big Pay." It tells and *proves* exactly *how*—in a short time, right at home—you can learn the Tenor Banjo for play or pay. Read about the splendid Tenor Banjo that comes with your very first lesson.

More good times, more friends and more money are waiting for you. Get them this easy, fascinating way. Send the coupon—read the book—then judge for yourself!

A. F. BLOCH, President

NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MUSIC
Studio 36120 100 Fifth Avenue New York City



**Send today for
this FREE Book**

CLIP . . . SIGN . . . SEND

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I'm interested in your Free Book, "The Play Way to Popularity and Big Pay." Send my copy at once.

Name Age.....

Address

City and State

Your Introduction To That Amazing Novel

SPY X-44

Mr. Painton reveals the source for his authentic spy classic.

I HAVE pursued many avenues of research in my effort to get new material about the World war in all its phases, but none more startling than that which produced the story which begins in this issue of *BATTLE STORIES*. I had started out to get a few salient facts for a front-line spy story. I wound up with the most remarkable document it has ever been my privilege to peruse. It happened this way:

I came to New York from Florida and immediately sought out my old friend, George Zimmer, who was a secret intelligence officer during the late war, and one of the greatest adventurers I have ever known. To him I communicated my desire to get material for a spy story.

A meeting was arranged and we parted.

That was on Wednesday. On Friday night I went to his pent-house on the roof of the St. Hubert Hotel on Fifty-seventh Street. He gave me a cocktail and a smile. Then he handed me a great, thick bundle of typewritten papers and said: "Look that over and see if you can get any dope out of it."

That was at 7 o'clock. I began reading at once. I suppose I had dinner; at least, George ordered it and said I ate. But I don't remember. All I know is that at 2 o'clock in the morning—too late to catch a train to my home in Forest Hills—I looked up from the last page of typed manuscript.

"George, is this on the level?"

"The bird that wrote it lived it," he replied.

"Who is he?" I asked next.

"You'll never know that—or will anyone else," returned George.

"The code of the service is secrecy. I thought you might get material for a story out of the yarn and prevailed on him to let me show it to you."

"Why," I said, "about all I'll have to do is go over this, tele-

scope a few incidents, speed up the action a bit and cut out some things, and it is the best spy story I ever read. Will you let me print it?"

The upshot of it was that he—the unknown X-44—would let me print it anonymously.

So I cut it here, dramatized it there, took the problem of the stolen formula as a basis, and made it into the yarn that

you readers of *BATTLE STORIES* will presently begin.

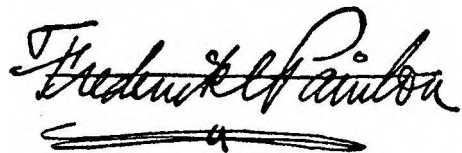
All I can say is that the incidents are all true and that there is historical verification for many of them. Of course they covered more time in the real story than they do in this edited part.

The thing that swept me off my feet is the truth of these almost incredible adventures. I have made footnotes to identify certain famous incidents and personages and now I pass it on to you. The story follows on the next page.

In this story, as in no other, be it novel or history, you will find an accuracy of detail and intense probing of the great spy systems that honeycombed America and Europe during the World war. *Spy X-44* will grip you with its revelations of secret service methods, the most carefully guarded department of government.

Titled *Spy X-44*, the only name by which his colleagues knew the master operative whose adventures Mr. Painton has put in novel form, this dynamic story by the author of *Conquest of America*, is the best work of his writing career.

THE EDITOR.



SPY X-44



"The jig is up!" I announced calmly after the first fusillade had taken its toll in the sub-deck of the Vaterland. A riot gun in the hands of a husky police sergeant emphasized my words.

CHAPTER I

A SUMMONS IN THE NIGHT

IT WAS dark on H Street that April night. There was hint of rain in the air. Washington lay quilted in darkness, waiting in the suspense of 1917 for what was to come. I had dismissed my cab at the corner of the avenue, as the Chief had bade me do. And now I walked swiftly along in the darkness toward Professor Floyd Jarrell's home.

I was puzzled by the hasty summons which the chief of the secret service had sent me. Not an hour previous I had alighted from the train after a hurried trip from Los Angeles where I had been at work on the Mooney-Billings case.* I was tired but I could not ignore the

*Tom Mooney, a labor leader, and Warren Billings were under arrest, charged with bombing a preparedness day parade in San Francisco in 1916 causing great loss of life. They were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

True exploits of an American master spy form the basis for this secret service novel by the man who wrote "Conquest of America".

By FREDERICK C. PAINTON



Caught in the act of disabling the liner, the German sailors crouched, smoking pistols lowered. Would they give up or shoot it out?

Chief's peremptory order. So I had come straightway.

Just as I reached a point where the hedge surrounding Professor Jarrell's home commenced, some one stepped out of the darkness behind the trees. A small, round object was pressed against my side.

"Stand still," said a harsh voice. The gun hammer clicked menacingly.

I immediately halted. "What's the big idea?" I asked, throwing a chuckle into my voice.

"What're you doing here at midnight?" came the counter-question.

"I'm X-44," I chanced, "and the Chief sent for me." If the man was a secret service agent he would understand; if not, no harm was caused.

"Oh," there were relieved notes in the other's voice. "O. K. There are a dozen other dicks around the house so I better take you to the door."

I knew at once that the man who had held a gun against me was a secret ser-

vice operative because he recognized my code number. So I did not ask him questions as we moved up the sidewalk to the porch. He would not have answered them. But nevertheless I was puzzled.

A hasty summons in the night! Detectives guarding the home of Dr. Floyd Jarrell. What was this all about?

Two other detectives came out of the darkness and still another stood on the porch. But at my guide's signal they stepped aside. The next instant I was inside the door and there was the Chief coming towards me. The other operative exchanged signals with me and retreated to his post in the street.

Then the Chief and I shook hands.

He looked very grave. His kindly, shrewd, blue eyes were buried in wrinkles and his hair was nearly white. I was shocked by the change in him and this must have shown in my eyes, for he smiled wearily and motioned toward a chair.

"Sit down, Dick," he said. "These are tough times."

He pulled out his inevitable box of Regie cigarettes and passed me one. As I lit it, I felt his keen eyes on my face. He smiled only once again and that was when I adjusted my spectacles with a motion familiar and characteristic of all men who wear them.

My eyes, however, are perfect and the lenses in my spectacles are plain glass. But I have found that spectacles impart a mild, innocuous appearance to the wearer, giving a slight disguise, and, more important still, they serve to hide revealing lights in a man's eyes when he hears something that upsets his mental equilibrium. Furthermore, slightly colored glass in the lenses will change the color of the eyes. So, most of the time, I wear them.

The cigarette going, I waited patiently for the Chief to explain.

Presently he did so.

"It's war, Dick," he said quietly. "Tomorrow President Wilson will ask the congress to declare a state of war against the German Empire."

THE news did not upset me much. Since February I had believed such a step inevitable. The Allies saw it coming and so did Germany; it was just a question of time. Yet I shivered slightly at his words, as if already sensing the terrific ordeal that lay ahead.

"And we've got to begin gathering in German spies," I said.

He nodded gloomily. "We're supposed to begin," he corrected, "but like all the rest of the nation we're absolutely unprepared. We know there are many spies here. The papers you stole from Von Papen proved that. And even getting rid of him and Captain Boy-ed hasn't solved the situation."

He paused and gloomily regarded the ornate fireplace of the comfortable room in which we were sitting.

"And worst of all," he said slowly, "Count Von Krieger is operating in this country!"

At his words my calm deserted me! Von Krieger! In the United States! The devil!

"How do you know?" I demanded.

The Chief smiled bitterly. "First of all, Trench* of the British secret service advised me a month ago that Von Krieger had left Mata Hari to her fate in Paris and was coming to America. You see, the moment Germany realized that war was inevitable they were bound to send their best man."

I nodded agreement. "Germany knows," I added, "that if the war goes on long enough for us to get in with all our strength she'll lose. So right now she must know absolutely just how soon we can make ourselves felt on the western front. And so they send Von Krieger to find that out."

"Precisely," said the Chief.

We fell silent for the moment, realizing the terrible task ahead. Von Krieger had made sport of the French Dieuxieme Bureau and laughed in Downing Street's face. When Dr. Herr Lant Metz, the German spymaster in Paris was captured

*Capt. Ronald Trench, of the British Royal Marines, a brilliant counter-espionage officer.

and executed, it was Von Krieger who had re-organized the spy ring. Beyond even Annemarie Lesser, known as Made-moiselle le Docteur, he was the most dan-gerous agent the Germans had. Unpre-pared, with no training, we must oppose his machinations. A sweet job!

"And," I said as a thought struck me, "if Von Krieger can apprise our unpre-paredness accurately and tell Ludendorff just how much time he has in which to beat France and England, the war may be lost before we can get fighting men on the line."

"Again yes," muttered the Chief. "And Von Krieger can do it. However, he's after bigger game at the moment."

That brought me back to the present. "I was going to ask you," I said, "what was the meaning of this guard around Jarrell's house and why you summoned me here for a conference at midnight."

The Chief of the secret service sighed and flicked his cigarette butt into the empty fireplace. Then he straightened up.

"Von Krieger is after Jarrell's poison gas formula," he said quietly.

"The hell!" I jerked. I found myself sitting bolt upright.

"Exactly," he sighed.

This was tremendous news. Dr. Floyd Jarrell is, of course, known to all of you, and was known to me as the most important link in America's war chain. Dr. Jarrell of the Dupont's and the American Chemical Foundation was without doubt the greatest scientist of America if not of the world. A wizard in chemistry, he had been experimenting for years with volatile gases of the perma-nent and transitory variety. Out of this group of experiments had come a deadly poison gas known only as "Formula F".

The secret of this gas was his own and no other chemist had been able to fathom its mystery. Some said it was a combina-tion of *cyanogen* and *arsenic trioxid*. But this was only a guess. And even if true the method of compound to obtain the deadly result remained Jarrell's.

All we knew was that this Formula F was an instantly fatal gas even in small quantities against which ordinary gas

masks were of no avail. The Allies, Brit-ish and French, had been desperately seeking to obtain Formula F, shrewdly realizing that they could win the war with it. And Jarrell had been on the verge of offering it to England when a peremptory summons to the White House definitely quashed the idea. President Wilson wanted to keep neutral to the end and if war came then Formula F would be our vital contribution to winning it.



NOW with America stand-ing on the brink of war, the Formula F became more and more vital to us. So to learn that the shrewd Count Von Krieger was trying to steal it became as-tounding and fearful news.

"But how do you know?" I asked after the pause.

"Von Krieger made his bid to get it early today," the Chief replied. "Jarrell is in the habit daily of taking a long motor ride—out toward Hagerstown, Mary-land. Today on a lonely stretch, a drunken motor car driver swerved his car into Jarrell's, driving it into the ditch. Men leaped from the car to kidnap Jarrell. The fool carried the formula with him."

He paused and lit another Regie cigar-ette.

"The attempt should have succeeded; it was neatly done. But Providence was with us for once. A motorcycle policeman happened along and drove Von Krieger and his men away before the kidnapping was effected."

He inhaled and glanced toward the ceiling. "Jarrell's up there now, experi-menting with a gas mask that will resist his Formula F. We've got this house surrounded by our agents and Washing-ton detectives. Jarrell's a stubborn man, but I think I've persuaded him to put the formula in a government vault early to-morrow."

I nodded. That was good sense. Von Krieger was a man of desperate courage and no place was safe against him.

Again a silence fell upon us during

which I lit and consumed another cigarette.

"Dick," said the Chief after a while, "I brought you into the secret service. I trained you—and I'm rather proud of the finished product. You've made mistakes, but who of us has not? The big thing is you've got guts and guts is what we need now. You have spent many years in Germany and speak the language like a native. So I've chosen you for the one supreme task—you've got to run down Von Krieger and get him out of our way."

I mentally whistled at his words. After France and England with trained counter-espionage bureaus had failed to capture this super-spy, to ask the youngest member of our own secret corps to do the job was rather a large order.

"We've got to land him," insisted the Chief. "The White House has already given me a special appropriation. We'll capture any number of other German spies as soon as war is declared. But what good will their capture be when Von Krieger will go out and set up a new organization and we'll have to begin all over again? We'll be rid of Von Papen, Boy-ed and Von Bernstdorf, but Krieger will be here, running information into Mexico and thence by wireless to Nauen."

He paused and studied my face, then of a sudden he clapped me gently on the arm. "You'll get some help, son, but it's a one-man job and I'm banking on you. Remember, old man, we're facing the greatest spy organization the world has even seen. We've got to guard against bridges being blown up, against transports being torpedoed. We've got to guard the lives of our leaders in this war. We've got to make sure that no information gathered at our training camps gets to Germany. And to stop all that we've first got to lay Von Krieger by the heels. A tough job, son, but—"

He never finished that sentence.

At that moment there rang through the house the most hideous scream I have ever heard. It came from upstairs—a woman's shrill scream of mortal terror.

THE Chief came out of his chair in a bound. His face was as white as paper. Instinctively I jumped to my feet beside him, my hand caressing the butt of the automatic in my shoulder holster.

There! Another scream!

It retched the air with its horrid message of fear.

"My God!" cried the Chief. "Can Von Krieger—"

He broke off and raced to the ornate staircase. I followed him at a run. He made at once for Jarrell's laboratory.

It was an annex or wing to the regular building, built with a door leading off the main, upstairs corridor. A single light gleamed yellowly in the hallway. By its glow I saw upon the floor the crumpled figure of a woman—an old woman.

"Look to her," jerked the Chief.

He himself wrenched at the knob of the door leading into the laboratory. A glance told me that the woman was uninjured, merely had fainted.

"Dammit! The door's locked!"

I stepped to the Chief's side. A gleam of light came through the keyhole, showing no key was on the other side. Instinctively I dropped and applied my eye to the orifice. By a white student's lamp lit inside I made out the figure of a man on the floor. I sensed it was a dead man's form.

I drew back, applied the muzzle of my automatic to the lock and fired twice. The next moment we flung ourselves at the door and it crashed open.

Trained for all emergencies as we were, the sight that met our eyes stopped us in our tracks.

Dr. Floyd Jarrell lay on the floor near his experiment table. And it needed but a glance to see that he was quite dead—murdered.

CHAPTER II

A TERRIBLE BLOW



A MOMENT later I stood beside the body of the world's greatest scientist. Dr. Jarrell lay face downward, a pitiful object. From his published photographs you will remember that he

was a hunchback with a huge, barrel torso, thin, spindly legs and a great, beautiful head mounted upon a thin, turkey neck. His eyes were covered with thick-lensed spectacles that singularly enough had not broken when he fell.

The manner of his murder was easy enough to discover. The back of his head was a welter of blood-matted hair. And not a foot away lay a bar of alloy, still stained scarlet with a few hairs clinging to it.

The body lay near the huge, pressed-steel table where he habitually worked. And the Bunsen burners, retorts, test tubes and other paraphernalia were scattered and smashed by a ruthless hand.

Naturally my first instinct was to search the body. I found nothing but pockets turned inside out. I stood up, a horrible fear gripping me.

"Did you say," I asked the Chief, "that Jarrell carried the formula on his person?"

His eyes sought mine and read there the answer.

"Yes."

"It's gone."

"The copy," muttered the Chief. "My God, he kept a copy in the safe."

He darted across the room to an old-fashioned, square, steel safe. The door hung on the hinge. The searching was a perfunctory deed. The Chief came back, and he seemed ten years older.

"The copy's gone, too," he muttered.

But I paid no attention—I had realized that before he spoke. I was, at the moment, engaged in searching frantically on the table for something else. I found scraps of canvas, some solid rubber blocks, some thin rubber sheets, a few cone boxes. That was all.

"How near finished with the gas mask was Jarrell?" I asked.

The Chief shrugged. "We'll never know. He spoke of having the 'answer' and would experiment tomorrow with the mask."

"Well," I said pointedly, "there is no mask here now."

"I didn't think there would be," he replied.

By this time Garven of the Washington police was in the room. Also another secret agent who will pass in this story as Matthews. They had revived the woman in the hallway and now brought her into the laboratory.

She was, I saw, an elderly woman, at least fifty whose name was Mathilda Corcoran and she was Jarrell's housekeeper. She was weeping bitterly and while Garven sought to calm her I reflected upon the enormity of the disaster which had befallen.

That Von Krieger was responsible for this murder and theft I did not for a moment doubt. He, too, would know of Wilson's decision to ask for war. Gossip and fact move swiftly in Washington. And knowing that soon he would be openly opposed by us he had chosen this moment to strike. America had been dealt a foul and perhaps fatal blow before she had so much as thrown down the gauntlet of war.

With Germany in possession of Formula F, and, more vital still, having the gas mask which would nullify its horrible results, she might defeat France and England before we could get our men to the front. And if, by any conceivable chance the use of the poison gas was delayed until our men were on the lines, then I shuddered to think of the casualties among our youth. Against that gas was no known antidote, no known gas mask. A frightful picture of our olive drab men staggering blindly in a murk of gas, clasp- ing at their throats and falling dead with bulging eyes, gripped me and I shud- dered.

By this one act Germany might have won the war.

But how had the crime been engineered? With guards thick about how had Von Krieger pierced his way through?

These reflections were interrupted by the final restoration of Mathilda Corcoran to calmness. The Chief took up the questioning and I stood silent and listened.

The gray-haired old woman talked with a great deal of unnecessary detail and

irrelevance, so I shall summarize briefly the facts obtained.

DR. JARRELL after his dinner summoned Hemel Prenzl, his assistant, announcing that since the government requested that the gas formula and mask be turned over on the following day it would be necessary to continue work that night. As was his custom he went at once to the laboratory and locked the door. The key was in his pocket.

When, she said, he was engaged in such work no one was permitted to bother him. He would not answer telephone calls nor receive any one. She had passed at midnight near the door and wondering if he intended to work all night, had stopped and rapped. Hearing no reply she rapped twice more. Then she applied her eye to the keyhole as I had done. What she saw caused her to scream and fall senseless.

"But this Prenzl," I asked, "who is he?"

Garven replied: "Man of thirty or so—we've checked him on the foreigner's list at police headquarters. Polish born. Graduate of University of Warsaw. He specialized in chemistry and came to this country in 1914, three years ago. He worked for the Duponts in Delaware for a time and then went to the American Chemical Foundation. Jarrell took an interest in him and when the doctor went into this private experimentation the fellow came with him."

"Polish," I said. "Many of the Poles favor Germany in the war."

No one made any comment on this significant fact.

"Where is Prenzl now?" I asked.

Garven shrugged. "He's not here. But I'll swear he didn't get through the guard I've got around this house. I've checked them and nobody has gone in or out except you two."

The Chief looked at me queerly. I went on to develop my own line of reasoning.

"How long ago did Jarrell begin work on this Formula F?" I demanded.

"Immediately after he left the Ameri-

can Chemical Foundation," the Chief retorted.

"Ah," I said, "and Prenzl came with him at that time. Singular! This Polish chap comes to America at the outbreak of the war, he gets into our most important powder manufacturing works, then moves to our chemical research group and becomes the assistant of Jarrell just when the doctor is developing a most vital gas formula."

The juxtaposition of facts had their significance.

"Therefore," I started to continue, "he—"

Sharply, brutally from the rear came the crash of revolver shots. A hoarse shout. Another shot. Then silence.

In a bound Garven reached the door and I heard him thudding down the steps. A motor roared from the street in the rear of the house. There was still another sharp explosion.

We looked at each other. It was hell to feel so helpless.

"If he's got away," I started to say.

Then I paused and darted to the window of the laboratory which gave off to the south, that is to say, in the direction of the shots. Faintly I heard Garven shouting. I raised the window.

"Garven," I called. "Garven."

I heard him cursing fervently.

"What is it?" I yelled.

"Somebody shot Dexter and O'Reilley and got away in a car down H Street," he shouted and fell to cursing again.

Slowly I lowered the window.

"Von Krieger," I said dryly, "seems to have arranged for everything."

The Chief cursed.

"We seem," he said wearily, "to be always a few minutes late on this affair."

There was silence. We waited for Garven. Yet there was a baffling note about this whole affair that puzzled me, puzzled me so much that finally I aired my curiosity.

"It strikes me as singular," I said, "that with Prenzl in this house—presuming that he is a German spy—Von Krieger should go to the lengths of trying to kidnap Jarrell. All Prenzl had to do was to

make a copy of the formula some night and run. Then there would be no risk. Yet Von Krieger risked all—"

"Probably Von Krieger wanted to keep Prenzl planted in the household," offered the Chief.

I shook my head. "No. This Formula F is, we admit, the greatest gas in the world. By itself it can almost win the war. Von Krieger, then, would sacrifice anything and everything to get it. There's something phony about this."

I got the answer an hour later. Garven, responding to a telephone call from headquarters came back to the laboratory where we were searching for clues, with a long, bewildered face.

"I sent out the description of Prenzl," he said, "tall, thin bird with black mustache and two gold teeth on the upper left side."

"Well," I said, sensing a new disaster.

"They've found Prenzl," he replied, shaking his head, puzzled. "But he's dead. He was found floating at four o'clock this afternoon in the Potomac River, with his throat cut and was being held for identification at the morgue. Somebody took a description and Hanrahan compared the two and identified him."

"My God!" cried the Chief. "That means then that—"

"That the man who was here was not Prenzl but Von Krieger," I finished.

"Can you tie that?" muttered Garven.

CHAPTER III

A SINGLE CLUE



THE Chief looked at me an hour later and flung his Regie cigarette into an empty test tube.

"A clean job," he said wearily. "I haven't discovered a thing. Have you?"

"No," I replied, equally dispirited.

Garven and the secret service man also reported nothing. We had not as yet a theory of the murder except that Prenzl was a planted German spy.

The two policemen in the rear, one of whom had wrestled with the escaping

Von Krieger before being shot, were both dead and could tell us nothing of the appearance of the fugitive. Von Krieger had evidently used gloves when wielding the bar, for there were no finger prints.

About all we established was the method of escape into the rear yard. And this was, it proved, ridiculously simple, despite Garven and his guards.

Jarrell's house was of the English manor style and was overgrown on four sides with clinging ivy. When the addition of the laboratory was made, Jarrell had caused sticks to be temporarily placed up the walls to guide the ivy in its climb. And, as experiments proved, a man might, by opening the rear window, slide down the wall in comparative safety. Due to trees in the rear yard and darkness, the guards could not see such a move. The car, likely, was parked, and after shooting the two guards all Von Krieger had to do was to climb in and drive away. Von Krieger, then, had murdered Jarrell, slid down the stick, shot his way to his parked car and calmly driven off.

And so, close to three o'clock in the morning, we were forced to confess ourselves baffled by the German spy. We had no clues, we had no description. We had nothing. Von Krieger might make for the Mexican border. It is thousands of miles wide and we could not guard every inch of it. Ocean liners still sailed for British and Dutch and French ports. He might choose this direct method and take it back himself. But if we did not know what he looked like, how could we guard against his boarding an ocean liner?

The Chief is a dogged, tenacious person who never gives up. But at that moment I saw a hopeless expression on his usually pink face. His mind was running the same course as mine.

I had sent Garven to have his men make a thorough search of the yard by flashlight and also of the spot where the struggle ensued. A button, a shred of cloth, any of these things might make a clue. And the order gave me something to do, made me forget for the moment how utterly baffled and defeated we were.

"He's a genius," the Chief was mutter-

ing. "I don't wonder Trench said he was a man of a thousand disguises. Imagine the consummate nerve of a man impersonating Prenzl. And Jarrell, apparently, never caught on."

I said nothing.

A few minutes later Garven came in. His glum face was lifted a bit and I eagerly awaited news.

"We found a scrap of paper," he said, holding it out. "But whether it belonged to the cops or this Von Krieger or was just lying there before anything happened, I can't say."

"Did you look at it?" I asked, taking it.

"Yeah. That's why I don't think it belongs with this case. Just a scrap of paper which the wind blew along. It hasn't anything on it."

I glanced downward carelessly, half-convinced by what he said.

Then: "The hell it isn't anything!" I gasped.

At my words the Chief darted to my side.

Silently I pointed. The paper was freshly torn, that much was immediately apparent. It was a triangular bit, evidently torn from good bond, for it was a shredded tear.

But what interested me profoundly and aroused the Chief to a high pitch of excitement was this:

"24 V ; 89— 6 U 111"

"Great guns!" exclaimed the Chief. "It's the dictionary code!"

"Precisely," I cried, "the dictionary code! Which shows Von Krieger must have lost it. Perhaps Dexter or O'Reilly in grabbing for him tore it loose. At any rate, being the most difficult code in the world, only Von Krieger would be using it."

The Chief nodded silently. "The next thing is to uncode it."

I looked soberly at the cabalistic line. That was the problem, uncoding.

And for this reason. A dictionary code is, doubtless, the safest code in the world. Were two men to prepare one, using an obscure dictionary, destroy the book, and then themselves die, the messages they

penned in that code would remain forever a secret.

A dictionary code is composed by picking the words necessary to the message out of any ordinary dictionary and then identifying those words by a simple system known to the receiver.

Taking as an example the word "war", and it happens to be on page eight hundred and fifty-five and is the tenth word in the second column, the word can be identified as follows:

"10 X /// 52." The ten stands for the tenth word. The X indicates the column of the dictionary because in preparing the code the codifier has gone through the entire dictionary from the beginning assigning a letter of the alphabet to each column. Punctuation marks are always used to indicate the number of hundreds of pages, always ending with a part of the real number. But so far as we knew it might have been page 52, one-fifty-two, two-fifty-two or eight-fifty-two.

The reason that the code was abstruse and insoluble to us at the moment was that we did not know what dictionary was chosen by Krieger nor his system of identification marks. Once we knew those two factors, uncoding would be simple. Not knowing them our only hope lay in a series of experiments.

It was maddening to have such an important clue at hand and be unable to solve it when we knew minutes were more precious now than anything else in the world.

We left Garven in charge of the laboratory with orders to fine-comb everything. Then I suggested to the Chief that we rout out the guardians at the Congressional Library and begin work. We might be minutes, hours, days or weeks in solving that code. But until we did solve it we were at a standstill.

We had coffee and sandwiches at an all-night restaurant and went to work. Never in all my experience have I started on a problem with less hope of success...

DAYLIGHT! Tremendous stacks of dictionaries! Scores of sheets of paper lying around, messed up. Two

gaunt, tired men, driving themselves on when the brain reeled at the thought of one more effort.

Hour after hour passed. Afternoon. And then came the word. President Wilson had asked the congress for war. And the speedy message came from Capitol Hill that within a short time the congress would pass a resolution declaring war.

We had food sent in. Now more than ever we must discover the secret of that cryptic line:

"24 V ; 89— 6 U 111"

We had worked out a hundred possibilities only to find that when we applied the test, the line made no sense. And yet every minute was giving Von Krieger his opportunity to leave America for good, carrying with him the destiny of the war.

We had gone through bi-lingual tomes, obscure dictionaries, standard big dictionaries. And now as dusk began to fall and it seemed that weariness would force us temporarily to abandon the quest I tried a new combination on a small, popular, desk dictionary.

"We'll run the alphabet through the columns from the front this time," I said.

The Chief nodded wearily. His head sagged, great purple pockets appeared under his fine eyes. "I'm getting old, Dick," he muttered, "old with a great war coming on. I can't stand this racket as I used to."

I pressed his arm. A great man, the Chief. God knows, this country never appreciated the unselfish service he gave. I loved him like a father. But the momentary emotion passed.

Then on to the work.

"There are one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight columns," I figured. "Twenty-six letters to the alphabet. That means sixty-eight divisions of the book with twenty columns hanging over. So the very last column in the book is a 'T'."

He jotted this down and we worked out that V, being the twenty-second letter, it must indicate the second column. The point now was: was the eighty-nine indicative of page eighty-nine, or one-eighty-nine, or two-eighty-nine, or what? The book being eight hundred-odd pages long, we would have to scan each page,

eighty-nine, then one-eighty-nine and then two-eighty-nine and so on. On each page I would chance looking at the twenty-fourth word, inasmuch as 24 was the first figure of the code.

Once we established this word, the rest would be easy, because I had already determined that the code represented but two words.

Eighty-nine yielded nothing. One-eighty-nine was as bad. Two-eighty-nine did not have twenty-four words in the column.

"Beaten again," said the Chief hopelessly.

It looked as if he was right.

I thumbed to page three-eighty-nine. The twenty-fourth word in the second column was "hostelry".

"By God," exclaimed the Chief, "hostelry means hotel. Using a code he might very well be making a date with some one to meet him at a hotel."

It was a possibility. More, it was the first ray of hope in a terrific seventeen hours. This word at least made sense.

Eagerly now I figured that the letter U indicated the first column of an unknown page. Now we must determine what "111" meant. The six, doubtless, denoted the sixth word. We began at the front of the book and found something on page 11 that made our hearts thump and our eyes gleam.

The sixth word in the first column on page 11 was "Acropolis".

"Christopher!" shouted the Chief. He leaped to his feet. His eyes blazed like stars. Forgotten now was his fatigue. He trembled with excitement.

"That's it, lad," he shouted in the quiet murk of the room. "The Acropolis Hotel on East Street in New York is on our suspect list as a gathering place for German sympathizers. That's where he went, lad, that's where he went."

The reaction set in. With the knowledge that our clue had led in the right direction, we fairly crumpled onto the long, mahogany table—I don't know how long I remained that way. I was not asleep, I was not awake. I seemed in a torpor.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and struggled to gather my wits. It was the Chief shaking me gently.

"War will be a fact within seventy-two hours," he said. "You've got to go to New York—now—and smoke Von Krieger out."

I nodded wearily. I could see his point. We had no accurate description of Von Krieger. To raid the hotel would be merely to apprise him of our suspicions and put him doubly on guard. I would have to assume a disguise, doubtless that of a German sympathizer. I would have to use trickery, lying, double-dealing, anything to catch the trail of this man and find Formula F and the gas mask. I could not rest, I could barely eat until that was done. Such was the law of the secret service.

"Come on over to the office, lad," said the Chief, "and we'll make the set-up. Take any risk, do what you will—but recover that formula. If he escapes you and takes to a liner after war is declared I'll have the White House put an embargo on every ship sailing. We've got to have him, lad, the war hangs in the balance."

I got up silently and followed him to the door and so into the street and across the broad boulevard to the Department of Justice building.

Though I did not know it I was beginning the most astounding chase that man ever engaged upon. A man hunt that led into perils that now make me blink to think of. If I was tired at this minute I was to be more tired later. If I thought I had used shrewdness in prying into Von Krieger's code and getting a clue, then I was to know what shrewdness and cunning was later, when my life hung in the balance of a second's judgment.

CHAPTER IV

A TREMENDOUS PLOT



THE Hotel Acropolis is an old, rather decrepit building on East Street, huddling under the gigantic shadow of the Queensborough Bridge. The East River, grey and dank with salt

smell, laps at its very feet. It is a hotel for seafarers of the better class, petty officers and minor mates. I only had to look at it once surreptitiously to know that to invade it and discover the whereabouts of Count Von Krieger, I had a task cut out for me.

I did not rush into the situation, for there would be nothing gained by haste at this particular moment. By the use of certain agents attached to the New York office of the secret service who had stool-pigeons in the neighborhood I pieced together a fair summary of what was going on.

First, most of the petty officers of the German interned trans-Atlantic liners lodged there when spending a night off their moored ships in Hoboken. This was a valuable clue inasmuch as it seemed to indicate that Von Krieger did not intend to take the circuitous route through Mexico. I learned through means which must remain secret in these pages, that the British had succeeded in piercing every radio code the Boche had created. More important still, I was told that the Germans knew this. Hence, it stood to reason that Von Krieger would hesitate to commit the secret of Formula F to the air since he would be giving its secret to Britain. Furthermore, if the gas was to be used the German soldiers themselves must be protected against a chance blow-back by treacherous winds which meant that at all costs the mask itself must reach Germany. The whole conclusion seemed to be that Von Krieger would make an attempt to take passage on some neutral liner and escape to Germany.

I stalled around, checking up these ships. I learned that there were two ways the German spy could go. He could take passage to South America and re-ship from Buenos Aires or Rio de Janeiro. Or else he could run the risk of going on the Norwegian liner *Drottningholm* or the Holland-American ship, *Rotterdam*. Both of these last sailed on the afternoon of April 5, 1917.

Meantime, the Chief had been busy. We deliberately courted disaster by arresting Christian Karl Muller, a German

spy who had been tipped to us by the British Embassy. The arrest was made quietly and carefully, so carefully that the man was unable to communicate with his friends. The Chief went so far as to forge a note saying that Muller had gone to Fort Leavenworth in the hope of picking up information from our General Staff school. The spy was rushed to New York. I met the group who held him at the Federal Building at Broadway and Nassau Streets.

"It was a prize pick, Dick," said the Chief when he saw me. "Muller has papers for seaman first class. He's about your build. Best of all he's been working independently outside of New York. By taking his papers you can get into the Acropolis without suspicion."

So it was that on the night of April 4 after Jimmy the artist had worked on my face and body for two hours I sallied north equipped with Muller's papers.

I had intended to spend a few days easing myself into the group's confidence. But a code telegram from Washington wrecked this and aroused us once again to great excitement.

The Chief came in, his face gray.

"The inside tip is out," he said quietly, "that Congress will declare a state of war with Germany as of midnight April 6."

"The hell!" I muttered. "With his pipe-lines in Washington Von Krieger will know that as quickly as we."

"Exactly," said the Chief. "The situation works against us in that respect but for us in another."

"I see what you mean," I nodded. "Von Krieger, if he is to get away by boat must sail before the declaration of war is in effect, for after that every man presenting a passport will be scrutinized."

"You've got twenty-four hours to lay him by the heels," said the Chief gloomily, "and the devil of it is you can't get any help from us. If we so much as stir out of routine he'll get word and be frightened off."

AT FIVE o'clock I strolled with a slight sea-gait along East street, a small, black bag in my hand, and turned

into the Acropolis Hotel. Was I hopeless? Hardly, but I was most certainly discouraged. Men engaged in espionage do not take strangers quickly into their confidence. Yet somehow in some way I must identify Krieger within twenty hours.

In the dimly lighted lobby I made out several loungers who stared coldly at me. They wore pea jackets, blue coats with brass buttons, and as if their Teutonic appearance was not enough, they talked volubly in guttural German.

My own hair was as blonde as ten quick washings in peroxide would make it. I wore spectacles whose delicate coloring changed my eyes to blue, and I slouched my way of walking so as to take fully an inch off my height.

I rolled in nautical fashion to the desk. Behind me I heard references in low German to the *Vaterland*, the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*, the *Prinz Eitel Frederick*, all Hamburg-American liners caught in American ports when war broke out in 1914.

I instantly decided to talk in low German. This was a frightful mistake as I learned later. High German is the language of the upper classes in which such words as "*ich*", "*mich*" and others ending in "*ch*" are spoken hard like a man clearing his throat to spit. Low German speaks such words soft, "*ish*", "*mish*", and the like. It seemed to me that Muller would speak low German.

"I want it a room for a few days," I said, heavily accenting my voice.

The clerk, a thin, triangular-shaped fellow with horn-rimmed glasses on a big nose regarded me coldly.

"I don't think we have any," he began, suspiciously.

"Listen," I said harshly in German, "I am Christian Karl Muller. My number is *Wilhelmstrasse* eighty-eight. I am suspect. Tomorrow America declares war and I must get away. I am no longer useful here. Give me a room and tell your chief that I must be protected. You understand?"

He regarded me, not suspiciously, but doubtfully.

"I have a room. The rest shall be seen to."

I went up to the room, thanking God that the Chief had supplied all Muller's papers. For I hadn't a doubt but what I would be interviewed within a few hours.

I was right. Less than an hour had passed before there was a slight knock at my door. I was bending over the washstand pretending to cleanse my face.

"Come in," I called in German.

I heard the door open, then close. I kept at the pretense of washing my face, grabbed a towel and held it over my countenance as I turned. Peering through the folds of it I saw a tall, dapper individual whose appearance indicated he might be a purser.

"*Guten abend*," he said politely. "I'm Krass of the *Vaterland*. Aren't you the Muller who was chief steward on our last westbound trip?"

A trap! Again I thanked Heaven for Muller's complete papers. The spy had never served on the *Vaterland*.

"No," I replied gruffly. "I was on the *Stuttgart* on the South American run—before I got to doing something else."

"Ah, then," he said, still politely, "you knew my cousin Weinach. He was steward of the third class."

Mentally I ran over the list of men I should know. I dare not hesitate a second.

"I knew him well," I said. "He was killed in a brawl at Montevideo."

"Ah, yes," said the other. "Poor fellow, trying to—drop that towel and throw up your hands!"

In a twinkling he had a bulldog type of revolver trained on my chest. I started, I stared. This Krass was no longer mild. His eyes blazed.

Perforce, I dropped the towel and put my face into an annoyed expression.

"What the devil!" I exclaimed. "Is it your habit to walk into other people's rooms and hold them up with a gun? If you want money—"

"You know I don't want money," snapped the other. "Quick now—your papers. If you're a fraud your life is lost."

"Humph!" I said carelessly. "I suppose you must take such precautions, but—"

I let the sentence die away and unscrewed the heel of my left shoe. Out of this I produced the linen bit on which my name and number appeared together with the secret stamp of *Wilhelmstrasse*.

"Christian Karl Muller of the Navy Intelligence, *schweinhund*," I growled. "And be careful with that gun—it might go off."

"Yes, it might," he said sinisterly. But after examining the papers his suspicious attitude relaxed. He regarded me curiously.

"Why are you here?" he asked. "The report has it that you went hastily from Washington to Fort Leavenworth."

"I told the clerk the truth," I growled. "I'm suspect. The damn secret service know that war will be declared tomorrow and are rounding up any one whom they suspect. The *verdammte* British told them about me. You remember I had a narrow escape in Edinburgh when I went to report on the British Grand Fleet."

Again he made a remarkable change. A smile crossed his face. The gun vanished into his pocket and he held out a hand.

"Glad to see you, Muller. You'll forgive the precautions. And now! You're just in time to be of help to us," he added chuckling. "We have a surprise for the Amerikaner that will sweep them off their feet."

I beamed. "With our organization we should be able to do much," I said. "There are bridges in Canada that must be blown up to prevent sailing of American troops from Canadian ports. Not," I added, chuckling heavily, "that American troops will sail for many months to come."

"Right!" he added. Then more cautiously. "Listen! I shall take you to the Chief Agent. I was merely sent to sound you out. He will tell you what we intend. Ah, I tell you the Americans will be amazed at the quickness with which we strike."

I nodded, but my mind spun at the possibilities his words evoked.



I KNEW there were many secret agents in the country, and many, many more sympathizers. What, then, did they intend? Destruction of our pitifully few munitions plants in Connecticut? Possibly, although I knew that the Chief and the War Department were guarding them night and day. But to express too much curiosity now might be to ruin all.

So I nodded again. "I'm your man. But remember, unless I am sent to another station I'm liable to be interned. *Gott verdamnt* the British. I've been trailed for days."

"Wait here," said Krass. "I'll be back in a moment."

He went out. I listened to see if he locked my door to imprison me. But he did not so I knew my disguise had not been pierced. In about ten minutes he returned.

"The Chief Agent will see you now," he said. "I've told him you were on the *Stuttgart* and he will likely place you in command of one group of the seamen."

"*Sehr gut!*" I said carelessly.

But God, how my heart leaped at his words! Command! A group of seamen! Through my mind flashed the only possibility! If America was to enter the war abroad she would need transport ships. She had very few. What more natural, then, than that she should seize the German interned liners and convert them into transports? And, knowing this, keen, cunning Von Krieger would forestall such a move by wrecking the engines of them—or even sinking them at their docks!

For the moment my greater mission of finding Von Krieger and the Formula F sank under my desire to fathom this plot and take measures to prevent it.

A complete change had come over Krass as we walked along the dark corridor, lit only vagrantly by flickering gas jets. His arm was through mine. He talked volubly of the boring necessity of staying day after day in New York when he would have liked to have been with the *unterseeboot* fleet, or aboard the battle-

ship *Konigsberg*, to which he was attached as reservist. I answered him as best I could, but my mind wrestled with the amazing plot I had stumbled upon.

We reached the next floor, went clear to the end where Krass knocked peculiarly on a door. It opened at once. A common sailor peered out, then stepped aside and swung the door open for us to enter.

My heart was thumping, I was forced to exert will power to breathe naturally as I caught sight of the man seated before a small desk near the window.

I had never seen Von Krieger in my life. The British said no accurate description of him existed; the French called him a man of a thousand disguises.

Yet I was as sure as that I was alive that before me sat the Graf Bernhard Otto Von Stam Und Krieger!

He looked up as I entered and pierced me with steel-gray eyes that were as merciless as those of a tiger. I saw briefly that he was thin, yet graceful, with broad shoulders. He had light brown hair above a thin, distinguished face. Lines ran deeply from nose to mouth and his ears were pinned back to his head in a way that told me he was disguised! He looked to be thirty-five years old. He wore a pair of pinch nose glasses that had a black ribbon dropping from them to his vest.

The thrill that was mine then will never be repeated. I stood face to face with Germany's master spy, face to face with the man who was to be my most deadly enemy. We were to meet many times again but never under such circumstances as these. And I was never to see humor or compassion in those deadly gray eyes that were as alarming as the twin muzzles of two Colts.

A paper rustled as he laid it aside. There was a faint scraping as his chair moved back. He lowered those alarming eyes to light a thick cigarette and inhale deeply. A gush of smoke blew out the wax taper in his delicate fingers.

"Glad to see you again, Muller," he said in an arrogant fashion that marked him for a Prussian. "You come in good time. We've a coup planned that will stir loud outbursts of indignation." He smiled

bleakly, coldly. "I can use you to advantage. Krass tells me you are suspect. If so I shall have you transferred to Mexico. Across from Laredo you can pick up information of value."

"*Yahwohl, Excellentz,*" I said. "Had I continued on to Fort Leavenworth I would have been arrested on arrival. As it was I fooled the swine. I dropped off the train in Iowa at a water tower."

His eyebrows went up, he peered at me strangely. Then he shrugged.

"Cleverly done," he commented.

His hand moved slightly as if knocking the ash from his cigarette. A cold thrill went down my back. Was that a signal? I could have sworn it was. What had I said or done—

"In the matter of Dr. Jarrell," he cut in on my thoughts, "have the secret service any clues?"

I guffawed.

"None at all, *Excellentz*. The Graf Von Krieger is a genius—I should like sometime to meet him."

A cold smile, as wintry as a blizzard swept his ascetic features.

"You are enjoying that honor now—that's right, Krass."

Behind me came a blood-congealing voice.

"Up with your hands, you hound!"

A cold, round muzzle jabbed between my shoulder blades. I raised my hands. I expressed surprise. I swore.

"What in the devil's name," I began.

"Search him, Krass, for weapons," came Von Krieger's bored voice.

"But," I protested.

"Save your breath," Von Krieger's voice was now terrible. "Whoever you are, you seem to forget that Muller was a gentleman. He did not murder the German language by speaking low German as you have done. You are an American spy or traitor or both. In either case, you'll never harm us any more. Tie his hands and feet, Krass."

CHAPTER V

A DARING CHANCE

IT WAS quiet in the room where they took me after Von Krieger's startling denouement. Save for the distant hoot of a tug beating up the East River I could hear nothing.

It was dark there so that I could see nothing of my surroundings. All I knew was that my hands and feet were securely bound, that I was a prisoner to Von Krieger who would doubtless kill me when opportunity offered.

For the moment I gave myself up to futile cursing of my stupidity in not talking to Muller personally and discovering what sort of German he spoke. But cursing did no good. I had stuck my head into this trap and I either got out or I died; there was no middle course.

What made me quiver with anger was to know that I was within hand's reach of the all-important Formula F, and what was more important, had knowledge of a colossal scheme to wreck the interned Hamburg-American liners.

"Germany will depend upon speed to win the war," I thought. "Russia is out of the war with the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Germany will mass her troops on the western front and strive to defeat France and England before America can become a factor in the war. So Von Krieger seeks to delay us. The wrecking of four huge liners capable of carrying thousands of troops will accomplish just that. If, also, Germany gets the secret of the gas the war will be lost to us within ninety days."

I writhed in impotence as these thoughts tormented me.

I wrenched at my bonds but succeeded only in lacerating my wrists.

Then I became calm. I had to get away. The question was how?

I had been thoroughly searched. Nothing that would aid me had been left. So presently I resorted to rolling over and over on the floor, this way and that to discover what was in the room. It was an old room, and stank of decay. The rag car-

pet was torn. After ten minutes of this I discovered that there was a single chair, a table and a bed. That was all.

The bed legs were round and could not help. So were the table's. But there might be something on the table.

Deliberately I rolled heavily against the warped legs of the table. It went over with a fearful crash.

But my heart leaped with joy. In that crash was the sound of breaking glass. I rolled quickly toward the sound and cut my wrist on a chunk of glass. It was the vestiges of an old oil lamp.

Ah, a chance now to saw my way clear.

The only peril lay in the possibility that the crash had been heard. Well, whether it had or not, speed was what I needed. Frantically I groped with my hands bound behind me until I found a chunk. I rolled upon it, moved it against the heavy clothesline that was wrapped around my wrists and began to saw.

I cut my wrists again and again. The glass slipped time and again. But that did not matter. Each minute seemed a century in passing. But at last a quick wrench of my hands separated the frayed strands. It was but a moment's work to unwrap my legs. Then with my handkerchief I bound up my bleeding wrists.

The next problem was a weapon!

My guards would be armed. I groped in the dark for the table. A quick wrench separated one of the legs which gave me a cudgel.



I MOVED to the door in the faint hope that even if it was locked I could burst my way out. False chance! No amount of straining produced more than creaks and groans.

I was still trapped, and what chance would my cudgel have against men armed with revolvers?

Now came a period of waiting which wore on me. I had decided to take one desperate chance which small though it was, had at least a faint possibility of success. The minutes became hours....

Then of a sudden I heard footsteps

outside. A key scratched against metal, the knob turned and an oblong of yellow light gleamed across my prison.

At that second I was lying where they had left me, my cut bonds lying across my legs so that they could not see I was free. Under me was the cudgel. I threw a quick glance upward.

Only two. The one behind was Krass. The other man I had never seen before.

"Be quick with this," said Krass. "The Chief Agent has sent all the men to the liners. He is taking no chances on delay now."

"Give me the chloroform," said the first man.

He half-turned. Krass reached into his side pocket, evidently to pass a bottle. And at that second I lunged to my feet and was across the room in a twinkling. Never have I moved so fast before or since.

"Look out!" shouted Krass and went for his gun.

But the first man turned too late. My cudgel crashed down on his unprotected head. He dropped like a shot and never moved.

Krass stepped backward and dodged my blow. His hands came away and the heavy bulldog revolver swept up to the aim.

I dove headlong at him. There was no time to raise my cudgel to strike aside the gun. All I could do was shoulder into it.

Crash!

The reverberation of the explosion thundered like a cannon burst.

Something ripped through the cloth of my coat. The next instant I brought up my left elbow, struck his arm and smashed forward with the stick into his narrow, rat-like face. He went back, after that, clearly off balance. And before he could so much as pull the trigger again, my club thudded down on his head.

He squealed like a stuck pig and fell wriggling to the floor. It was no time to mince matters. I leaped upon him to pin him fast and with a terrible blow swept the club down in an arc onto his head. This time he lay very still with blood seeping out of his ears and nose.

But this success was only momentary. The shot had aroused the hotel. From the dimly lit corridor came shouts and the scuff of running feet. Krass had said that most of the men had been taken to the Hamburg-American piers on Hoboken for the sabotage job. But there would be some left and they would not hesitate to kill me.

Running feet came down the corridor. I was cut off. I grabbed the revolver Krass had dropped.

A door led off the corridor to the right, in the direction from whence came the tug whistle. Unhesitatingly I flung myself against it. The door gave so quickly that I fell sprawling inside.

"Halte!" came a voice down the corridor. "Wo gehen sie?"

A revolver shot thudded on the air. A streak of orange lanced the darkness. A bullet crashed into the wall where I had just stood.

I got to my feet. Pale gray light came through a window. A second's examination sufficed to show that I was on the second story of the hotel, that there was no fire escape. My cudgel to which I had clung smashed the glass of the window into a thousand bits.

The footsteps were closer. I could not get out of the window before the leader would be upon me. I turned back a brief second and looked around the door jamb. A man was running recklessly toward me, less than fifteen yards off.

Krass' gun came up to the aim. I pressed the trigger.

Crash!

A hideous scream wrenched the air. The man stumbled and fell to his knees, moaning: "*Ich bin sterbe. Sterbe!*"

A moment's interlude followed as those behind him eased off at this sudden tragedy. It gave me the time I needed. My foot cleaned off the bits of glass from the sill, I gripped the cudgel between my teeth, pocketed the gun and hung myself over the side. It was a thirty foot drop, perhaps more. But it had to be risked.

For once in my life I prayed for luck. I had had so little of it.

Then I loosed my hold.

Even as I dropped like a plummet above my head a face appeared. Then a gun glittered. A gun that splashed orange and sent whistling objects past me.

Then I struck—struck hard, bent my legs and let myself pitch sprawling. For once luck favored me, for I struck on my toes, let the speed of the fall shoot into my forward lunge.

On the sidewalk beside me lead was hissing as it struck. Windows slammed open. All secrecy was being sacrificed by the Germans to make sure of the kill.

With suspense sickening me I got to my feet. Could I walk? Yes, but my right ankle was strained. I could not do more than half-run, half-drag myself toward the opposite side of the street.

One gun, two guns, three guns, were now in action behind me. Certainly Von Krieger, or at least his men, were trying desperately to get me. But night makes a bad light by which to shoot, and although I could hear slugs whistling around me, some terribly near, I was untouched. And once on the other side of the street, with pedestrians gathering to gawp at this attempted murder, the firing had to cease.

But I did not wait. I knew they would be after me. So I continued my half-run and walk until I reached Fifty-second Street and Sutton Place. Here there was a taxicab.

"Federal Building at Park Place," I gasped. "And ten dollars if you do it in ten minutes."

"Hang on," yelped the driver and we sped like mad downtown.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE ON THE SHIPS

I MUST have made an insane sight as I scrambled out of the taxicab, throwing a bill to the driver, and raced up the broad stairs of the Federal Building. Less than a minute later I was in the headquarters of the postal inspectors where we secret service men make our headquarters when in New York.

I dashed through the door. There sat

the Chief. With him was a man whom I knew only as X-53. They both looked up in astonishment as I stopped panting before them.

"It's ten o'clock," I jerked. "You've less than fifteen minutes time in which to save the whole damn Hamburg-American fleet from destruction. German agents are either going to wreck the engines or open sea-cocks and sink the whole business."

"Good God!" gasped the Chief.

"Von Krieger is with them, I think. We've a chance to bag the whole affair here and now."

While they sat in stupefaction I gave them a brief outline of what had transpired. And when I had done, the Chief burned the telephone. We planned to make simultaneous raids on the Acropolis and on the Hoboken piers of the Hamburg-American line.

Only for a second did the Chief hesitate. War had not yet been declared. It was a terrible breach of neutrality which we now planned. Yet the safety of thousands of men hung in the balance.

Then: "The hell with the law!" growled the Chief.

In terse sentences he ordered out the riot squads of the New York police. Shotguns, rifles and revolvers! Another group headed by X-53 was to raid the Acropolis.

At 10:35 the first patrol load of policemen sired their way across town to the Hudson River tubes.

The Chief tried to prevent me from going.

"Your ankle needs attention," he protested.

"The hell with the ankle!" I exclaimed. "To have a cunning spy like Von Krieger in the bag and not be there at the finish—not much!"

We commandeered a special Hudson and Manhattan train in the name of the United States government. Sixty cops crowded into that one coach.

Five minutes later our ear-drums were shocked by the compressed air of the tubes as we sped under the Hudson River.

River Street debouches almost directly from the exit of the tubes in Hoboken. This being a late hour, there were not many people abroad. If there had been they would have been amazed to see sixty cops in groups of fifteen each moving up the street like shock troops on the front line.

As we advanced cautiously, hugging the fences that barred off the piers, we outlined our plans. Since the internment of these ships in 1914 and 1915 (the *Prinz Eitel Friederich* came in voluntarily after being cut off and surrendered) the crews had been living aboard. Money had been sent for their upkeep by the Imperial German government, as had additional moneys to keep the craft in condition. Hence, although I had seen many of the crew at the Acropolis, they represented but a small fraction of the whole inasmuch as only a percentage was given shore liberty at any one time.

The question facing us as we divided up, fifteen to each ship, was whether we would encounter heavy resistance. If we did, then fifteen cops would have small chance against at least three hundred sailors to a ship.

But we banked on the fact that Governor's Island would send troops to quell any great disturbance and that the Germans would realize this. For them to cause bloodshed was to sign their own death warrant. Even Von Krieger might find it hard to keep them in line.



I WAS with the squad which was assigned to the *Vaterland*. The Chief took that going aboard the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*.

The monster *Vaterland* (which later became the *Leviathan*) was berthed bow in. There was a half-moon with an inshore breeze on which scudding clouds ran swiftly across the blue vault of the night. Against this the great V of the bow loomed like a gigantic skyscraper turned on end. From her superstructure a few lights gleamed.

Beyond in the stream tugs went innocently back and forth in the task of drag-

ging tows loaded with New York's garbage.

A wooden picket fence shut off outsiders from the grounds. Below the sign Pier 15 there was a small shanty and a gate. At this gate a watchman stood.

"Vat you vant?" he asked in a strongly accented voice.

"I want you to keep quiet," I growled. "Make a shout and you'll go to jail."

The moonlight gleamed on the buttons of the cops.

"Gott im Himmel!" groaned the man, but he made no effort to cry out or stop us. The next instant we were inside and running swiftly for the gangplank which led to an open hatch on the port side forward. No one was around this gangplank.

It was very silent here for the second and in that interval we heard sounds that bore out our worst fears.

Clank! Clank! Smash!

Hammers on steel! The work of destruction was going on!

I put two men with riot guns in the lead with orders to shoot their way on board if need be. Then we rushed.

Three sailors were on the deck smoking. One cried out. All threw up their hands at sight of our weapons and pleaded in German to be spared.

I had crossed to Europe on the *Vaterland* in 1911 and I remembered there were elevators running from the B-deck foyer to G-deck. I impressed one of the sailors and sent eight of my squad to get below as quickly as possible. The others I assigned to rounding up German sailors and locking them in the forward salon.

Then I myself went down the steps four at a time and reached G-deck just as the terrific report of a riot gun bespoke resistance. There followed the rapid thud of rifles, the sharp crack of pistols. I heard the police sergeant named Flanagan booming out orders.

Before me as I reached the bottom of the companionway stretched an awesome sight. A policeman lay in the foreground, his tunic leaking crimson. And beyond, swaying, black and greasy and quite drunk, were eight sailors armed with pis-

tols. They shouted: "*Hoch, hoch!*" and stood to their weapons.

And so standing they died one by one.

"Kill 'em all, damn 'em," shouted Flanagan. I learned later that the dead policeman was his cousin.

This resistance cleared, we moved close to the engineer's quarters and found there another elevator leading down into the engine room. To make sure of no accidents I sent three men down the winding steel staircase. We passed forward into compartments where the compressed air was sufficient to blow you through the water-tight bulkheads.

And here, in the turbines we trapped the sabotage men!

That they would not at once surrender was indicated by a stream of bullets most of which flattened themselves against the steel bulkheads around us.

I saw one man with what appeared to be a light machine gun and his companion was inserting a strip of bullets into the breech. I shot them both. One man took my slug squarely in the face and his features spattered into nothing and he died before he hit the gridiron.

Three more chose to shoot it out. The others began to call "Kamerad"!

"Drop your weapons and get behind number four boiler!" I ordered.

They sullenly dropped their pistols, and while two of the cops gathered these up, I herded the others to the boiler. In my desire to see if I had trapped Von Krieger, I stepped too close.

These men were coal-passers for the most part, burly and black, strong and drunk. One of them cursed fervently at this instant.

"Traitor!" he yelled and grabbed me around the waist. He seemed to think, because I spoke his language, that I was a traitor.

In an instant I was battling for my life. Regardless of consequences this man wanted to kill me. There was no chance or time to use my gun. My weak ankle caved and I went down with this brute on top of me.

HIS black, whiskered face was close to mine, his liquor-laden breath was fanning my cheek. In a wrench I brought my hands up. I smashed into that bloated countenance. I grabbed him around the neck and then, pinning him fast thus, gave him the knee into the crotch until he howled for agony.

By this time the cops came up. But they were not needed; the man was out.

I got to my feet and continued looking for Von Krieger.

He was not there.

I had the cops search the engine decks from keel to forward boilers. But although we found other Germans, Von Krieger was not one of them.

His men, however, had wrought great damage. Working parts were smashed. The huge four-foot thick propeller shafts were partly sawed in two. The condensers were wrenched and smashed. In a few moments these half-insane men had wrought thousands of dollars worth of damage.*

And when, later, I climbed to B-deck and found the Chief just coming aboard I heard even worse news. The *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* was nearly ruined. Her engine room would nearly have to be replaced. And the *Prince Eitel Friederich* and the *Bremen* were as bad.

But what was worse now came.

"Von Krieger?" I cried anxiously.

The Chief's shrewd eyes widened, he started forward.

"Wasn't he aboard here?" he asked.

"No."

"He wasn't on any of the other ships," he said simply.

For a second we stood and looked at each other, too aghast at this blow to speak. Through our minds, however, ran the same thought: while we fought to trap his tools who had seriously wrecked the interned liners, Von Krieger had slipped away. He had tricked us neatly, leaving a cold trail.

"The man's a devil!" said the Chief.

*It took the United States several months to repair this damage but all the ships finally were re-commissioned and carried Yanks to France.

Wordlessly I agreed. At the moment I felt hopeless.

Then: "But the raid on the Acropolis," I said, "perhaps...."

I didn't finish. Three-quarters of an hour later, with the German crews safely under guard, the Chief and I were back at the Federal Building.

The raiding squad from the Acropolis was just coming in. With them they brought not only the clerk and hangers-on but also Krass and the other man whom I had smashed up. Both, the physicians said, were seriously if not fatally injured. Krass' skull had been fractured by my blow.

But though we searched and asked vain questions, we learned nothing. Von Krieger had not been among those bagged.

I slumped into a chair, abjectly disappointed. The Chief sat opposite and lit a Regie cigarette. I was too disconsolate even to take one.

We both knew the answer. Von Krieger was free with the key to the war and at the moment it looked as if America had lost the war before officially declaring herself in. It was the greatest blow of my career.

CHAPTER VII

THE CLUE OF THE ENVELOPE

THE Chief and I sat in the postal inspector's room in the Federal Building hours later. While I was carefully sorting every bit of rubbish that the raiding squad on the Hotel Acropolis had brought in by my orders, the Chief hung on the telephone.

It was eleven o'clock of April 6, 1917. War against Germany had been a fact for hours. The streets rang to the cry of newsboys selling black-headlined newspapers. The embargo on all ports of departure was in operation. Not a single person in the United States could sail for a foreign land without our scrutiny. Militia was in arms, credits were to be voted, the regular army divisions were being

mobilized. Everywhere the stir and excitement of war gripped the people.

And to us this manifest enthusiasm was like a blow. For we and we alone knew that of those boys leaving factory and farm for army service, thousands would die a horrible death unless we caught a trail that long since seemed cold.

I need not go into the awful effort we put forth to find Von Krieger after the raid. We inspected the *Drottningholm* and *Rotterdam* from stem to stern. We checked up on the passenger list and sought within the few hours remaining to us to identify every person. But it was all futile; Von Krieger was not aboard, apparently. We had guards warned at the ports of entry into Mexico. But that was a faint hope. There are too many places on that border where a man can slip across without being seen.

My brain was spinning with fatigue and the result of a concentration which had lasted for hours. It is a terrible feeling to know that the fate of your country and the life and death of thousands of fresh-faced boys rests upon your shoulders. And what wrought me up more than anything else was the fact that I had to stand to one side and watch the tugs back the *Drottningholm* and *Rotterdam* into the stream for their voyage to Europe knowing in my heart that Von Krieger was aboard one or the other. I had no evidence of this—only a hunch.

The Chief, waiting on the wire for some one to answer, turned a grave, gray face, bleak with responsibility, towards me.

"I've cabled the British Secret Service in code to make another search of the *Drottningholm* and *Rotterdam*," he said.

"Will Norway and Holland stand for the British stopping their liners?" I asked, picking over some old envelopes taken from Von Krieger's room.

He shrugged. "They'll have to. England has declared a blockade on Germany. We all know that Norway and Holland are supplying much raw material for war

munitions. England will invoke the Defense of the Realm act and—"

"Tell the other nations to go to hell," I finished.

Inspector Craft of the New York police entered at this juncture. He was a grizzled, leathery old man with a shrewd, eagle face.

"We've put every man jack of them sailors on the third degree mat," he declared, "and they all say they don't know Von Krieger, but that the ring leader of their gang intended to escape through El Paso to Juarez."

"Good!" I exclaimed. "That convinces me that Von Krieger sailed on the *Drottningholm* or *Rotterdam*. With the failure to utterly wreck those transports he will feel it more important yet to sail direct and get this gas into German hands in time for a fall offensive."

They both looked at me. "Well," said Craft, "what the hell good does it do you to think? The two ships have sailed now."

I did not answer, for at that moment I came upon a bit of crumpled envelope which had evidently served at one time to ignite a cigarette or cigar, for it was charred and half-burned in two.

I was about to toss it aside when I felt my heart leap. My eyes were glued to a single picture of a ship, a fat, two-stacked ocean liner which was printed on the left corner.

"My God!" I yelped excitedly, "here's the answer."

The telephone receiver dropped with a crash from the Chief's hand. In a second he had darted across the room and stood beside me.

"What is it?" he cried. "Speak, for God's sake."

Craft, no less eager, also spurted across to me. "Yeah, for crysake, what is it?"

The tension at the moment was terrific.

Silently I pointed to the fragment of ocean liner. For the sake of publicity whoever had made the engraving had retouched the lettering on the bow of the liner so that the name stood out plainly.

It read: "*Rotterdam*!"

"It's a ticket envelope," I explained needlessly, "and look!"

Scrawled on the face in pencil in a foreign hand writing was the partial remains of a name. We could only make out "Woerd—"

In a trice the Chief had returned to his desk and came back, holding the printed passenger list of the *Rotterdam*. It was printed alphabetically. But even so our answer stared us in the face.

"Jan Von Woerden, the Hague," was printed near the bottom.

"Geez," yelped Inspector Craft, "you got him nailed."

Our faces lifted, but only for a second. Then we looked at each other wordlessly.

"The *Rotterdam*," I said slowly after a while, "is thirteen hours out of New York."

"Beyond reach," groaned Craft.

The appalling knowledge that we had found the answer too late engulfed us. We all knew that a neutral liner on the high seas was immune, particularly as she had sailed before war was declared.

"We can send a destroyer to search her and take him off," said the Chief, presently.

I shook my head. "You know better than that, Chief. To stop a passenger liner of a foreign nation with a battleship on the high seas is tantamount to a declaration of war. President Wilson would never stand for it."

His shoulders slumped as he realized the truth of what I said. The world would howl a protest if we made such a terribly piratical gesture. It would be practically another *Lusitania* incident.

WE SAT in silence, eaten with the acid of knowing that we had the truth but too late.

"What's her first port of call?" asked Craft after a while.

"Plymouth," I replied. "But on occasion she does not touch there in war-time."

"What about radioing the British and having them stop her?" asked the Chief.

"More piracy," I said. "Our only chance is that she touches at Plymouth. Call the Holland-American offices and find out her schedule."

He was on the telephone in a jiffy and Craft and I stood in futile impatience waiting for the answer. It came quickly enough.

"The *Rotterdam*," said the suave voice at the other end of the wire, "is sailing direct for Rotterdam with a light cargo and small passenger list."

This was a blow. Even if the vessel had intended to touch at Cherbourg we had a chance. But now there was none.

"But," cried the Chief despairingly, "if the President knew that thousands of lives—the very war itself—hinged on us recovering the formula, wouldn't he consent?"

Silently Craft and I shook our heads. Wilson was pigheaded where justice was concerned. He would never consent. We all knew that.

It was maddening to be baffled in this fashion. For minutes on end we discussed the problem, went around and around it. We had no qualms ourselves; any one of us would have cheerfully sunk the damn ship to prevent this blow to America. We thought of radioing the captain of the *Rotterdam* but that would never do. He would want evidence; we had none and furthermore, if he was sympathetic to the Germans we would only betray our hand for nothing. We thought about using the English fleet again.

Then the thought came to me as I tried to visualize what Von Krieger would do.

"Listen!" I said suddenly. "If I were Von Krieger carrying such a vital secret, I'd never risk being stopped by the British in the Channel. He knows as well as we do that a little thing like international law would never stop us regaining the document. He knows we'd try the British."

"What would he do, for crysake?" cried Craft.

"He'd radio a submarine and either drop the formula overboard in a water-

tight bottle with a buoy," I said slowly, "or he'd be taken off himself."

"Wow!" said Craft. "I never thought of that, but by God, it's just what I'd do in the same pinch."

This answer only made our predicament worse. Perhaps even now a submarine patrolling off the Grand Banks might have picked up Von Krieger or the Formula F and it was lost to us forever.

I lit a cigarette, puffed on it and threw it away. The smoke tasted like straw.

The others remained silent, thinking, too.

I racked my brain once more. How—how could we intercept that ship?

Then of a sudden the answer leaped in blazing words out of my head.

"An airplane!" I shouted.

They looked at me as if I had lost my wits.

"What the hell do you mean?" cried the Chief, exasperated.

The idea grew on me in leaps and bounds.

"Listen," I said, "we can't send a destroyer. We can't wait for the *Rotterdam* to hit the Channel. But I can get in a plane and fly out to the ship and maybe do something before Von Krieger can act."



THEY fell silent at the size of the plan.

Then: "But suppose," objected the Chief, "the skipper of the *Rotterdam* is a German sympathizer—many of them are. The first move you make he'll clap you in irons, return the formula to Von Krieger and you'll be interned in Holland for the duration of the war. And the formula will be gone for good."

"A captain is a czar on his own ship," added Craft. "He could have you shot even and get away with it."

I turned on them angrily. "What the hell's the use of bringing up objections? It's our only chance. It's up to me after I get aboard the ship. Rather than have Germany get the formula I'd kill Von Krieger, burn the formula or throw it

into the ocean. What if they do intern me? We'll have saved the situation. What if I am shot? Other men will be saved. What if we are breaking every law in the world? This is war—man—war!"

I swung short and faced the Chief. "Call the army base at Mineola and have a plane made ready. A sea-plane if they've got one. If not then a land plane and we'll come down alongside the *Rotterdam* and let it sink. Find out the speed of the *Rotterdam*, find out her last radio report and we'll get a location. Quick, man, there isn't a moment to lose."

The Chief, once he has committed himself, never has any regrets nor does he lose time. At eleven o'clock he called about the plane.

At precisely twelve noon, I stood on the bare landing field at Mineola watching a Curtiss OX two-seater being warmed up and meeting the pilot. His name was Johnny Jordan and what was more important he was also a navigator.

I told him bluntly what to expect. "The plane will sink and we'll have to go aboard the *Rotterdam*. We may be interned for the rest of the war. Will you take the chance?"

He was a curly-headed, brown-eyed lad of twenty-two. He looked at me through the curl of his cigarette smoke and said: "You wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't important. If you do it why should I have a kick?"

We shook hands on it. Machine gun, ammunition and all spare weight was taken off the plane. Extra gasoline tanks were stored for me to dump into the main tank in case of necessity.

The Chief came running up.

"The *Rotterdam* was last reported ninety-five miles off Nantucket light on the northern steamship route."

"I can find her," said Johnny, "if this crate's engine keeps running."

His remark hit me like a cold douche. Not the thought of death by drowning, far from that. But if the plane's motor did not function, Von Krieger was gone forever.

But that was a chance we must take. I legged into the rear cockpit, adjusted my flying suit and goggles. Johnny sat up front. The motor seemed turning over nicely. He gunned it once or twice to make sure.

Then: "Yank the chocks."

The motor blipped; it roared, we shook, started and trundled toward the low, white, barrack buildings. Then suddenly those low, white, barrack buildings passed under our still turning wheels.

We were off on the greatest gamble of my career.

CHAPTER VIII

ABOARD THE ROTTERDAM

FAR off, a cigar-shaped ship with a streamer of smoke trailing away to the gray horizon appeared amidst the sun-capped ribbons of waves far below us. From the two funnels and general contours, I knew that this was our quarry. In the din of the throbbing motor it was impossible to communicate with Johnny save by thumping him on the back and pointing. He nodded.

Instantly the Curtiss OX piqued over and dived shallowly for the liner. We were exactly a hundred and fifty miles off-shore from the coast of Nova Scotia, and we did not have enough gasoline to go back.

We came down to within fifty feet of the topmost spars of the mast and then Johnny banked sharply and circled the ship three times. There was no mistaking what we intended. The boat-deck was thronged with scurrying ant-like people who gathered to watch this strange maneuver. It was, however, with a distinct sense of worry that I saw no depreciation in the bow-wave of the *Rotterdam*. She was not shutting off her engines.

Finally, Johnny looked around at me and nodded. I nodded back. We did or we didn't. Either the skipper of that ship was a human being or a devil. The next few minutes would tell.

With a crescendoing roar Johnny leveled off the plane and we shot ahead of

the liner about a mile. Here we circled once, marking the exact course of the *Rotterdam*. Then Jimmy with a reckless smile, neatly dipped over. We glided down to the waves. High above they had looked hardly bigger than ripples with long light ridges upon them. Now as we drew down they heaved hungrily and looked big and dangerous.

The motor shut off.

"Unfasten the safety belt," shouted Johnny.

I broke loose from the heavy buckle. Lower and lower we settled, the plane skimming the wave tops like a gull. Suddenly Johnny saw a long trough. We dropped. A sudden drag. The wheels had struck. A spume of spray. A sudden shock of halting. Then without warning the plane up-ended and dove for the bottom of the sea.

Oh, the terrific shock of that ice-cold water. It seemed I went down miles in it. I held my breath and swam violently upward. My head broke water within a few seconds and I saw Johnny, spitting salt water and hanging to the partly dis-closed tail assembly.

"O. K.?" he shouted.

"Yes. Are you?"

We looked back. Less than three-quarters of a mile away the huge bulk of the *Rotterdam* was bearing down upon us.

"Let us hope," said Johnny, "that she stops."

I was not very doubtful. The laws of the sea ordered them to stop. There were neutrals on board who would report any failure. And moreover, I could see a lessening of the white V of water at the liner's cutwater.

Providentially, Johnny had set the plane down somewhat to the left of the direct course, for the big liner, losing way, still was going too fast to come to a stop near us. She went by us like a monstrous mountain. Hails came faintly to ear. Passengers lined the promenade rail and on the boat deck I saw sailors working with the davits and falls to get a small boat overside.

A half mile beyond us the great vessel yawed in a seaway, a small boat oared its

way over the huge swells to us. The next instant I grabbed a boat-hook that some one extended and was pulled alongside and into the boat. Johnny followed me and we lay shivering in the bottom.

The boatswain could speak some English. "Vat in hell you do?" demanded he. "Der skipper he say gottdam such crazy fools."

The crew regarded us curiously until he ordered them to the oars.

Next he produced a flask of ardent Dutch whiskey and we killed the bottle between us. I felt better after that. We went aboard, were hurried to a stateroom where dry clothes were given us. We were drinking some hot coffee when an officer entered and said: "Captain Von Hoogenstraet wants you at once."



ON THE deck, we passed between a staring, curious line of passengers. I did not see Von Krieger among them, nor did I expect to. The chief officer led us up through the boat deck and so to the captain's quarters abaft the bridge deck.

I'll not soon forget Von Hoogenstraet. He was a fat, pudgy man, with a reddish-gray mustache and beard and cold, pitiless blue eyes. He spoke perfect English.

"What," he asked coldly, "is the meaning of this strange behavior?"

"We came out to catch the *Rotterdam*," I replied coolly.

"So I assumed," he said. "America is at war. This is a neutral vessel. Do you come as armed force or do you seek passage to Holland as plain passengers?"

"We are," I said after a while, "representatives of the United States Army Intelligence. While it is true that your vessel sailed a few moments before war with Germany became official, the truth remains that you have aboard a very dangerous German spy. More important still, he has in his possession a secret American document which he committed murder to steal. We have come to regain this document."

I could feel his hostility grow; but I did not intend to use trickery with a neutral nation.

"Please be more precise," he said.

Whereupon, deliberately, I explained everything as it had actually happened, leaving out only the secret of the formula. Captain Von Hoogenstraet heard me out in utter silence.

When I had finished he got to his feet and slowly paced back and forth. Beneath my feet the deck throbbed slightly; the engines had again been started, the *Rotterdam* had resumed her course.

"What you have said is interesting," the Captain observed after a time. "But with your purpose I have no interest. There is no one aboard by the name of Von Krieger. This Von Woerden may or may not be what you say. At all events he is a regular passenger on a Dutch ship and cannot be molested. This, however, I will do. When we reach *Rotterdam* I shall have him, as well as you two, turned over to the authorities. You will file your claim through the American minister. If what you say is true, the paper will be returned to the American government.

"One thing more," he said. "You have offered to pay a first class passage. Hence, you are entitled to the conveniences of the vessel and my protection. But so also is Von Woerden. Hence, if you attempt to molest him in any way you will be thrown in irons and interned upon arrival at *Rotterdam* as one who has attempted to violate Dutch neutrality. That is all; you may go."

Outside, Johnny Jordan looked queerly at me.

"He's a German sympathizer," he said, "and he wants to give Von Krieger a chance to save the situation. Will you obey?"

I smiled at him. "Did we fly out here and risk not being picked up to take a joy ride to Holland?"

"Hot dog!" he chortled. "Mister Richard Gray, you are a man I think I can like immensely. Lead on, MacDuff, I've got a six-gun and what it takes to make it shoot straight I've got in clusters."

A cabin was assigned to us on C-deck and by the judicious use of money and some generous Swedes we managed to gather a fair wardrobe. Every one was curious about us. A radio report had announced to them that America was at war; we were Americans who had risked everything to fly to a ship. So they knew we were up to something, and their impertinent questions became annoying.

But we evaded them and pursued a line of inquiry of our own. There were, it appeared, two hundred and eight first-class passengers, all presumably Dutch or Scandinavian. I found that Von Krieger as Von Woerden was quartered on A-deck aft. His stateroom number was A-21.

I assembled the information and made my plan of action. Johnny approved of it heartily.

Neither Johnny nor I stirred out of our stateroom that afternoon or evening. We had dinner served there. Von Krieger had, doubtless, seen us come aboard, or at any rate knew what we were after. So I did not wish to meet him until the moment when we had decided to strike.

So we bided our time until midnight in the cabin. But we were more cheerful now. We had won one trick of the game and with luck might make a grand slam.

WE went on deck about one o'clock. A three-quarter moon rode high in a cloudless sky. There was a heavy ground swell running, but no chop. Even Johnny remarked that it was ideal weather for submarines. The *Rotterdam* was running with all her port-holes open and she could be seen for miles. She had no need for secrecy as the German submarines had never molested her.

"I hope," said Johnny, "that Von Krieger hasn't got a squad of sailors guarding his cabin."

"Let's go," I said calmly but my heart thumped against my chest.

Softly, stealing along companionways, we came to the foyer. It was empty, silent save for the creaks and groans of a ship rising and falling in a seaway.

Johnny and I turned into the compan-

ionway where Von Krieger's stateroom was. Here we paused for a second and shook hands.

"If he goes for a gun, shoot to kill," I said.

I tip-toed to the door. Then I knocked. There came a stirring inside.

"*Was ist los?*" demanded a voice that sent a thrill through me.

"Wireless message, mein herr," I replied, disguising my voice and speaking in German.

There was a momentary fumbling with the lock. The door opened a crack.

"Ready," I snapped to Johnny.

We lunged against the door. I wedged it open with my foot. I drove my automatic through.

"Raise 'em high," I snapped.

We crashed into the room.

For a split second we stood motionless—death in the air.

Von Krieger was like a statue, frozen by this unexpected move. It was not the Von Krieger I had seen at the Acropolis Hotel. This man wore no eye-glasses, his hair was now blonde, and he had a thick blonde mustache and a pointed blonde beard. But in height he was the same.

And most of all he had those alarming eyes that bored into me now like the muzzles of six-guns.

"You're wasting your time, X-44," he said coolly. "You come too late."

I started to smile at this bravado, then as his eyes shifted to the port-hole, mine followed.

I cursed in surprise.

An electric blinker light was strung on a rope before the opened port-hole and even as I watched it spelled rapidly in light flashes visible for miles over the clean ocean the International code in German: "*Kommst—schnell—gefahr—*" the German signal for "Come quick danger!"

A sweep of my automatic smashed the thing to the floor. But I had a premonition then that I might be too late. Doubtless the liner was nearing the spot where the U-boat was to meet it. And Von Krieger, knowing that I would resort to anything to recover the formula after I

had got aboard, had speeded up the submarine by the message.

But still I decided to bluff. I might draw him out.

I laughed lightly. "I don't bluff, Von Krieger. You'd never dare have a U-boat hold up a Dutch liner."

He laughed, it had a chilled quality like melted snow.

"Are you trying to joke with me or fool yourself?" he retorted. "At this stage of the game, think you that Germany will stop at anything? You are not stupid, X-44. I recognize your ability. You have been extraordinarily clever, but luck has left you."

And so it seemed. "You, apparently, have marvelous resources in Washington to know my code number," I said carelessly, but watching him closely.

"Before peace comes out of war," he returned equally casual, "America will be many times amazed by Germany."

"Enough of this," I snapped. "Johnny, tie him up. Find his keys, so we can go through his baggage."

Again Von Krieger smiled at me in that maddening fashion.

"You waste your time," he reiterated lazily. "But if you insist on going through this farce, why—" he motioned with his head to his pocket—"there are my keys. The formula and gas mask are in that gladstone bag near the end of my bunk."



DESPITE myself I paused in sheer amazement. Either this man was withholding a main ace, or else he was a magnificent bluffer.

Only for a second did I pause with the key in the lock of the gladstone. Perhaps Von Krieger had set a trap—a mine—anything. I half-looked up. My eyes encountered his, his lips smiled thinly.

"Really, go ahead, X-44," he drawled. "Play your game to the finish. I admire men who never give up. The bag contains the formula, the gas mask and nothing else, upon my word of honor."

I was to learn then and later that Von Krieger's word of honor was sacred. He

always lived up to it. And so now, when I turned the key and slowly widened the mouth of the bag I saw lying on top a rubber and canvas contraption that could be nothing but the experimental gas-mask. And below it, in a waterproof envelope were papers. These I quickly examined. Crabbed formulae in Dr. Jarrell's own handwriting greeted me.

I held the secret of America's deadly gas in my hands. I had, for once, beaten the great Von Krieger. Quickly I stuffed the mask into my shirt, the envelope into my pocket.

But my moment of triumph was tinged with suspicion. He was not a man to accept defeat so philosophically. And his lazy, cold smile now seemed to mock me.

"The formula is too complicated to remember," he said quizzically. "I have the *trioxid* mixture fairly in mind, that is all. So don't try to memorize it—though even that plan would be of small use to you now."

His words chilled me. I went anxiously to the port-hole and peered out. Great ridges of moonlight rode the crests of the waves. There was nothing else but a great, vast emptiness.

I stood for a moment wondering what Von Krieger planned. Suddenly Johnny Jordan started and cursed.

"Throw them up," he growled, grimly. "I'll blow the head off the first man that moves."

I started, I swung, I stared at the stateroom door.

There I saw three flabbergasted men. The leader was the first officer. Behind him was the fat, pudgy figure of Captain Von Hoogenstraet! The third was a common sailor.

Johnny was leaning forward, his six-gun poked in front of him, and death glittering in his eyes. With a crash the first officer's drawn pistol fell to the deck.

The sound broke the spell. Von Hoogenstraet blinked and grew red with fury. His little pig eyes gleamed with rage.

"This is an outrage," he cried savagely. "It is piracy, robbery, a violation of Dutch

neutrality! I'll have you both imprisoned for this."

"The hell you preach," snapped Johnny. Without looking around he said: "What next, Dick?"

"Bring them in here," I ordered. "We'll tie them up and shove off in a small boat, loaded with...."

A sound that froze the rest of the sentence in my throat struck upon our ears. The stillness of the night was shattered by a sullen, faraway boom.

Rustling, sighing, hissing, screaming and roaring with fury, a shell screamed out of the darkness, rumbled over the *Rotterdam* and tore itself apart with a sharp explosion some yards beyond.

The German submarine had arrived.

CHAPTER IX

A GHASTLY CRISIS

WE ALL looked at each other, all except Von Krieger who now showed real emotion for the first time.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed, and I knew how he had dreaded the possibility of the U-boat not coming. "You see, X-44, your time is wasted."

The cool devil! Never had I admired or hated him more than at that moment. He had played his trump card and knew he had me licked.

Crash!

Another shell hooted out of the inky blackness and burst beyond the bow.

Captain Von Hoogenstraet looked at me. His anger had suddenly vanished, he was again the captain of the liner who knew his ship was in danger.

"If I do not heave-to," he implored, "they will shell the ship or torpedo us. Let me go to the bridge."

Johnny's gun held him motionless and I did not say the word to let him go. Indeed, I could say nothing. My brain churned with a dozen plans to escape only to have logic throw them out as fast as I thought of them.

"Please, please in the name of God," cried Von Hoogenstraet. "The next shell...."

Crash!

There came a splintering roar from

above. Likely part of the funnel had been carried away by that one.

A desperate thought came to me.

"How much speed are we making?" I cried.

"Twenty-three knots, our maximum," replied Von Hoogenstraet.

A new hope came to me.

"By God," I muttered, "we'll chance it. This ship making twenty-three knots will outrun any German U-boat ever built. If the sub came in on an angle we'll be out of range before...."

"But I'll lose my ship," cried the captain.

It was a question in my mind whether the U-boat would dare torpedo the *Rotterdam*. After the turmoil created by the sinking of the *Lusitania* would Germany chance bringing the Dutch into the war against them? It was a gamble and I took it.

I knew the officers on the bridge would never dare change the speed without the captain's orders. But to make sure I ordered him to the ship's telephone.

"Call the bridge," I ordered, "and tell them full speed ahead."

But the order was never given.

At that second, from the starboard side of the ship came a terrific explosion. Through the open door came the sheen of red fire that rose to blot out the cool blue of the night. The great vessel heeled over to port until I nearly fell down. Furniture slid across the stateroom and crashed against the wall.

Drunkenly the stricken liner reeled back to even keel, but almost at once developed a sharp list to starboard.

Incredible as it was the U-boat had fired a torpedo. We had gambled and lost.

Crash!

The huge vessel quivered like a shot dog. Again she heeled to port, and this time canted forward. Her bowels had been blown out. I knew she was doomed.

The captain moaned as if personally hurt. He and the chief officer began jabbering in Dutch.

Then suddenly, "I go," yelled the captain.

He turned and ran. Johnny hesitated, looked at me.

"Let him go," I said. "We've lost."

"Lost?" asked Johnny coolly. "With small boats still available?"

Ah, man, what a boy he was! Not a sign of fear did he betray. I stood debating whether I should burn the formula and mask or run this last gauntlet! Dare I take the risk of losing when thousands of lives hung in the balance?

"If you untie me and hand over the mask and formula," came Von Krieger's voice calmly, "I'll see that you are kept as prisoners of war. I have no desire for your lives—now."

That decided me.

"You haven't got them yet," I said. "Come on, Johnny, the small boats."

"You fool," said Von Krieger harshly. "You can't win. You..."

But we were gone, racing for the port lifeboat davits.

THE ship was well down by the head. The deck was a madhouse of screaming men. Panic had gripped the crew.

Each moment the liner heeled more and more to starboard. Her sinking was but a matter of moments.

Then suddenly around the corner of the superstructure came five German sailors. I recognized them from their little flat caps with the long ribbons. They carried rifles. Behind came a petty officer and with him Von Krieger! Von Krieger free so quickly!

"Quick," cried the latter in German. "There they are. Surrender, X-44."

Johnny's six-gun exploded with a roar and the foremost sailor was knocked backward flat on his back by the force of the striking slug. He never moved again.

Crack!

That was a rifle.

"Go it without me," gulped Johnny. "Good luck!" He reeled against me, fell with a smash to the deck, twitched twice and died with a smile on his face.

Blindly I fired into them. Vaguely I heard another rifle speak. The shock of the bullet as it struck me spun me around like a dervish. I fell to my knees, but not senseless.

The formula! The gas mask! Better to commit them to the ocean forever than have them used to destroy precious American lives. I crawled on my knees to the taffrail, fumbling for the envelope.

Then suddenly something knocked me flat. Two sailors stood over me.

A hand was inside my coat, a hand ripped my shirt from my back. Feet brutally kicked me into the scuppers.

"Quick," I heard Von Krieger say. "She's going down by the head fast. Row me to the submarine. Good! Here you are, Leutnant Mainz. You shall have the Iron Cross of the first class for this!"

I was still, strangely enough, conscious. I could feel the deck cant forward so far that I began to roll helplessly down the scuppers, until I crashed into a tangled pile of deck chairs. She was going down fast!

I could hear the gurgling suck of water, the terrific boom as watertight compartments gave before the inrush of tons of water. There was a frightful hissing from steam and men were still leaping into the ocean after tossing off anything that would float to buoy them up.

The deck canted still more. I tried to rise. I could not. I felt rather than knew that she was already gliding beneath the waves forever.

I had lost. Von Krieger was on a U-boat bound for Antwerp and safety. The gas secret was Germany's and the war was lost. I was glad that I was going down to my death. At least I shouldn't have to stay alive and bear the shame of my failure.

The sobbing, sucking cry of water rose high. The *Rotterdam* was poised for the final dive to the bottom of the ocean. I lay and waited for the end.

Helplessly wounded, and alone on the deck of the fast-sinking Rotterdam, Spy X-44 is in dire straits. The gas mask and the precious formula which mean victory or defeat for the Allies are in the hands of Von Krieger, now safely aboard a submarine bound for Germany. Can Spy X-44 hope to win in this desperate battle of wits? Read the answer in the next blood-pulsing instalment of this gripping, authentic, spy serial in the January issue of Battle Stories—on sale December 10.



"Yuh can't keep me in a lousy hospital," Dynamite yelled. "I'm goin' to fight!"

Dynamite Dugan goes A.W.O.L. from a hospital billet to the roaring front and earns himself the title of—

The MAD GUNNER

by L. B. McNICOL

“DYNAMITE” DUGAN, the toughest little Mick that ever squatted behind the twin handles of a Vickers gun, flung himself headlong at the rim of the shell hole and slid like a flash down its slippery side and into the reeking filth of its bottom, just as the “minnie” hit a scant dozen

yards away, rocking the earth with its numbing detonation.

Stunned momentarily by the concussion, he slumped against the side of the hole, breathing hard, while the geyser of earth and rocks skyrocketed by the shell rained in upon him. Jerry was showering down with everything he had, and

the Yanks were getting the full benefit of it. For forty-eight hours they had been swept by a veritable hail of shells, and things were getting tougher every minute.

Only an hour earlier Dugan had seen his platoon commander loaded onto an improvised stretcher and started for the rear. And a dinky little squirt of a medical man had tried to send *him* back too. But Dugan wasn't ready to go back. His left arm was in a splint, but his right was still in working order. He had proved that much when he had socked the medic right smack on the point of the chin and laid him out cold. And Dugan had ripped the blue tag from his own blouse, pinned it on the shirt of the sweetly-unconscious medic and deposited that man beside the other *blessés*.

The captain of the Medical Corps had raised hell. He had threatened Dugan with everything from demotion to hanging, with a court martial for good measure.

"Keep your shirt on, Doc," Dugan had told him, "and don't get yourself all worked up and nervous. My Looie told me to take charge of a couple o' guns, and I'm one of these soldiers that always obeys orders. But just so's I won't be cheating you out of a customer, I'll come back later and bring you a souvenir. Toodle-oo, Doc."

Since then things had happened. The Yanks had managed to cross the Ourcq—but they had *not* managed to enter the shell-ridden town of Sergy, in spite of the fact that a half-dozen different headquarters had commanded them to do so.

Dugan rested for a moment and nursed his shattered left arm. Overhead, flares "plopped" in a darkly overcast sky and spread their eerie, greenish light over an area of havoc and desolation. Flaming shrapnel slashed viciously at the rain-laden air and sent jagged slivers of steel zipping into the earth, only to have them belched into the heavens again by high-explosive shells, while from within the crumbling ruins of the town concealed Maxim guns sprayed

sheets of steel-jacketed lead into the American line.

The last of the platoon's Vickers guns had been placed out ahead but for several minutes now that gun had not been firing.

Dugan knew why. That was Tim Kirk's gun, and there was only one thing that could stop Kirk from firing. With a muttered curse, Dugan squirmed out of the shell hole and wormed his way toward the gun position.

TWENTY yards farther along he came upon the doughty corporal. One side of Kirk's face was smeared with clotted blood and grime, and the rest of it showed ghastly white in the light of the magnesium flares. His eyes blazed, as Dugan slid alongside.

"They got 'em, Dynamite," he screamed hoarsely, "every last man of the crew—with that damned minnenwerfer—blast their souls to hell!"

Dugan nodded somberly. "I knew it," he said simply. "And that's the last of our guns. Come on back, Tim."

"*Back?*" The corporal smacked a gnarled fist into the soft mud. "Back hell!" he screamed. "I'm goin' up and make them lousy Krauts pay for what they did to my crew."

Dugan's hard fingers dug into Kirk's arm. "We're *all* goin' up, Tim," he barked determinedly. "The rest of the boys are back there a ways, waitin' for you and me. Come on."

Still Kirk demurred. "If th' Old Man sees that we ain't got no guns," he said, "he'll order us to bust up and fill in with the other platoons."

Dynamite Dugan snorted. "Th' hell with th' Old Man," he cried. "Didn't our Looie tell us to wade in an' knock them Krauts out o' the town? That's th' only order I'm payin' any attention to."

Kirk's face lighted suddenly. "Listen, Dynamite," he said eagerly, "th' Looie was plannin' to wade in there an' take enough Maxims off th' Krauts to—"

"Certainly he was!" Dugan interrupted gruffly, "and that's what *we're* goin' to do. It'll be sweet revenge to clean 'em

out with their own guns. C'mon, Tim."

Ten minutes later, with Sergeant Dugan and Corporal Kirk in the lead, ten Yanks—all that were left of the first platoon—moved out toward the town. Each man's pockets bulged with Mills grenades, and each carried extra clips for his automatic.

Worming their way upon tensely flattened bellies, taking advantage of every bit of cover which the terrain afforded, dipping into one shell hole after another, they had covered half the distance to the edge of the town when they were stopped by Dugan's hissed command.

"Krauts," he whispered as he gripped the shoulder of the man nearest him. "Over there! See 'em? A patrol!"

The Germans were plainly visible at the rim of the flare light, moving like shadowy gray blobs toward the Yank lines. Without an instant's hesitation, with no necessity for a command, Dugan and his little band swung off at a tangent from their course to intercept the Boche patrol.

Nearer and nearer the two groups drew together. The Yanks went stealthily, knowing that as yet they had not been seen. Four of them, appointed by Dugan for the job, gripped grenades in their hands. Now the patrol was only thirty yards from where ten Yanks crouched in a shell hole.

Dugan gave the signal, and with the precision of clockwork four drab-sleeved arms made the swooping throw, four grenades described a wide, high arc through the air. There was a tense wait, and then the sharp, staccato roar of the explosions.



IN THE next instant, with screams of defiance on their lips, the Yanks flung themselves forward. But there was no occasion to use the automatics which each man held in readiness. The grenades had done their work well. The little band was about to move on when Dugan stopped them.

"Hold up!" he cried suddenly. "I've got the germ of a grand idea."

He faced them, his eyes flashing, his voice tense with excitement, and as he talked in quick, breathless phrases the faces of his crew reflected their amazement.

It was a wild, daredevil plan, but these were wild, dare-devil Yanks, and they took to it as a duck takes to water.

There had been six Germans in the patrol. Now six of the Yanks, Dugan among them, stripped the uniforms from the dead Boche and pulled them on over their own uniforms of olive drab. Five minutes later they moved on again; but now four Yanks in O.D. were flanked by six men in enemy gray.

"They'll think," chuckled Dugan, "that their lousy patrol is comin' back with some prisoners, and—Oh! baby!"

"Cripes, Dynamite," hissed Kirk exuberantly, "we c'n walk right into the town, and I'll bet my wife's allotment that there'll be some s'prised Heinies when we get there."

"Only," said one of the men significantly, "none of us c'n gargle their crazy lingo."

"Actions," said Kirk, "speak lots louder than words, and we'll let them do the chatterin' while we *act*."

Warily, yet swiftly and without mishap, they moved forward until at last they stood in the shadow of a building on the edge of the town.

Ahead of them, a littered street stretched like a black ribbon between vaguely outlined, sagging walls. And behind some of those walls, on the rooftops, or perhaps in rooms of crumbling homes, German troops manned Maxim guns which belched devastating fire into the desperately pressed Yank line down by the river.

Grotesquely incongruous in the uniform of a Prussian corporal, Dynamite Dugan gathered his little band about him and rehearsed each one in his mad-cap scheme. After seeing that everything was in readiness, the little band stepped out along the street:—four

Yanks apparently surrounded by an enemy squad.

They approached the first street intersection and whirled around it.

"*Wer da?*"

Dugan's heart seemed to stop beating. In the dim flare light they had almost collided with another squad of men, and each group stood gripped with the tense uncertainty of its position.

The Yanks could see the bulky form of the *unterofficier* and behind him the blurred, indistinct outlines of the platoon which he had been leading. His gutturally barked question had brought them up sharply, and they knew, instinctively, that whatever was to be done must be done instantly.

It was a ticklish moment. No time now to formulate plans. The Yanks had been taken completely by surprise and every man knew that seconds were vitally important.

EVERY nerve and fibre of Dynamite Dugan's body responded to the necessity for instantaneous action, and his hoarse scream to his men was a clarion call of defiance to the Boche. It was the well-known, instinctive Yankee battle cry: "Let's go!" And even as the words tore from his throat Dugan flung himself upon the German officer.

The others needed no further encouragement. Like a pack of marauding wolves springing upon a band of sheep, they closed in upon the dumbfounded Boche. They asked no quarter, and they gave none. It was kill or be killed, and they became ten dehumanized, individual fighting machines, actuated by self-preservation and the vital necessity to kill quickly.

Dugan's good arm went up, his automatic spurted blue-tipped flame squarely in the face of the *unterofficier* and that man catapulted backwards as though he had been struck by a battering-ram. Like a swarm of angry hornets, close-packed in the narrow street, the others closed in.

Unquestionably, the Yanks had the advantage. For the first few seconds, the German platoon stood as if thunder-

struck. To them the thing that was happening was impossible. They were momentarily incapable of action, and in those few seconds the Yanks made the most of the opportunity afforded them.

Side by side, back to back, the Yanks fought. As machine gunners they had had no training in the intricacies of bayonet combat, and in that respect the Boche had some advantage; but there was one form of fighting which every Yank knows: the catch-as-catch-can, rough-and-tumble style, and it became, instantly, that kind of a fight.

The encounter was as brief as it was brutal. It seemed that they had only gotten started when the Yanks looked about them and realized, a little dazedly, that there were no more of the Boche standing upright.

It was necessary to move on at once. Other Germans would soon be drawn to the scene, and these Yanks were not there to engage in battle with isolated bands of the enemy. They were there to silence Maxim guns, to turn those guns about and to pave the way—with Boche guns—for the American advance which they knew would come with the dawn.

Br-r-r-r-r. Br-r-r-r-r. Br-r-r-r.

The stammering, unmistakable clatter of Maxims cut the air, and the Yanks flattened themselves against the wall.

"Hist! Look, Sarge!"

A man clutched Dugan's arm, and pointed to one of the buildings further down the street.

Again the staccato tattoo of Maxims cut the air, and they knew that it came, not from one gun, but from a carefully concealed battery. High up against one ghostly, gray wall they could see the muzzle flashes of some of those guns.

"Cripes, Sarge," hissed the man at his elbow, "this burg is lousy with 'em. No wonder we couldn't break through."

Tim Kirk sidled alongside, and his raucous whisper sounded in Dugan's ear. "Near's I c'n make out," he hissed, "they're all packed in that one building. What's the good word, Dynamite?"

Dugan turned, and the light of battle shone in his eyes. "You'd think," he said quickly, "that these Krauts had been fightin' long enough to learn not to huddle all together like a flock of sheep, but it sure makes it a lot easier for us. C'mon, let's get goin'."



A GAIN the little band moved out along the street. Everything depended upon putting up a brave front. To falter, or to hesitate, however slightly, might well prove fatal to their plans. Circling the numerous piles of debris, and all the while keeping a sharp lookout, they came to the corner of the building from which they had seen the Maxims spurt; and it became evident then why the Boche guns were concentrated in that one spot.

From the street to the roof-line that building had been reinforced. Over its entire front an extra wall of brick and stone had been constructed, a task which must have required many arduous days of toil, but which certainly provided a maximum of safety, and an almost invulnerable vantage point for the Maxim nests. Proof, again, of the uncanny strategy and efficiency of the German high command.

"For cripes sake," gasped one of the Yanks, "it's a full-fledged fort, ain't it?"

Dugan turned quickly. "Pipe down," he barked curtly. "Remember, you're s'posed to be a Heinie." Then, signaling the others closer about him, he whispered a word of final instructions.

"You guys in O.D. hang back a little," he said, "and let us go first. We can't tell how many gun crews are up there, but we'll lead the way. When we get in where they are, hit hard and fast...and call your shots," he added, grinning, "or we'll end up fighting among ourselves. Ready?"

The circle of faces about him nodded affirmatively.

"All right then, let's go."

Brazenly, they stepped through the

doorway. The interior was almost pitch black and they were forced to feel their way along the walls. Upstairs, over their heads, the fiendish clatter of the Maxims roared almost without cessation.

It was Kirk, finally, who found the stairway, and his warning call brought the others quickly to his side.

"Heinies first," cautioned Dugan. "Here we go."

They found themselves in a wide hallway, where they stood for what seemed an interminable time, trying to accustom themselves to the blackness, trying to get their bearings. Gradually vague panels of opaque light loomed before them, doorways to rooms which opened off the hall; and from one of these rooms the deafening bark of the Maxims left no doubt as to their position.

"Come on," whispered Dugan.

With muscles taut and nerves strained to the breaking point they followed Dugan through that panel of light and into a large room, dimly lit by the reflected light of the flares which plopped outside.

Silhouetted against the windows, a dozen or more of ghostly gray forms loomed up before them, and once again they heard that quick, guttural question:

"*Wer da?*"

And this time the Yank battle cry, "Let's go!" came simultaneously from the throats of every one of those tense Americans, and reverberated thunderously within the room.

They went, this time, with clubbed pistols and with fists flying. And in an instant the room became a bedlam of screaming, fighting men. Blending with the hoarse cries of the Yanks, the deeper, hoarser shrieks of the Boche added to the din. One phrase only was intelligible to Dugan's men: the frantically screamed cry, "*Verdamnt Amerikaner!*"

TWO dozen twisting, squirming, battling men, all packed into one room, made firing impossible. It was too dark to even see one's adversary; but by prearranged plan each Yank as he came in contact with another form,

screamed the single word, "YANK!" before he struck. Thus they guarded against fighting with each other.

Like demons the Yanks waded in, and the Maxims ceased to fire as their crews leaped to meet them.

"Yank!"—"Yank!"—"Yank!"

First from one part of the room and then from another the protective cry rang out as the dare-devil Yanks went into action.

Something struck Dugan a stunning blow on the side of the head, and he staggered backward from the force of the blow.

"Yank!" he screamed, as he surged forward like a mad-man. He collided with the one who had struck him and they went down together upon the floor. In falling he struck his shattered arm, and a searing, red-hot pain shot down his side, causing him to gasp in agony. A hand gripped at his throat and a torrent of unintelligible words poured from the lips of the man with whom he was tangled.

His good hand gripped the muzzle of his Colt, and he brought the butt down with all his force, aiming at the Hun's head. There was a sharp metallic clang as his gat struck the man's helmet, and he knew that the blow had been ineffectual. The fingers at his throat were digging into the flesh. He was choking.

Again his arm shot up, and once again he swung downwards with all his force. There was a dull thud of steel against flesh, and the German's body sagged. With a hoarse scream, Dugan lunged to his feet and into the thick of the fighting again.

This was war as he liked it; the way he had often wished it could be fought. No lousy hiding in trenches and filthy shell holes; no indirect firing at targets that could not be seen. This was better. Man to man, give and take, kill or be killed—*that* was the way to fight!

"Yank!" he shrieked, as he plunged into a maelstrom of writhing, slam-banging figures, and "Yank!" came the instant reply from the man with whom he collided.

"Back-to-back then," cried Dugan.

"Stick together!"

"Yank!"

A scream sounded in Dugan's ear just as a hard arm encircled his neck, and he felt its quick, crushing pressure.

"Yank!" he screamed back. "Lay off!"

"Cripes!" yelled a voice nearby, "ain't there no more Krauts around?"

It was Tim Kirk's raucous voice, and Dugan roared an instant reply: "Over here, Kirk! All Yanks over here! Light a match, somebody!"

There was a surge of figures towards him; a quick, close crowding about him, and then suddenly a tiny flare of light. One of the men had struck a match and held it aloft.



EAGER, anxious eyes peered about a room littered with grotesquely crumpled forms. The place was a shambles. Near the windows four Maxim guns had been toppled over, spare parts and ammunition boxes were strewn all about, and all over the room a maze of loose, empty ammunition belts wound and twisted like a nest of giant snakes.

"Here they come, Dynamite! Th' whole damn German army!"

One of the men had crossed quickly to the windows, and his cry as he peered out into the streets was the answer to the thing they had vaguely dreaded and feared.

There was a concerted rush for the windows, and the little band of embattled Yanks stared down into the street which now was dotted with squads and platoons of Boche soldiers, all hurrying toward the building from which the Maxim guns had blazed. For long minutes those Maxims had not been firing; shrieks and the bedlam of many voices had sounded in their stead, and now these Huns were coming to find out why.

Three of the little band of Yanks were crumpled upon the floor with the Boche, leaving only seven to carry on,

and Dugan groaned as he whirled from the window and faced the rest of his little band.

He had hoped that they might get those Maxims out of the building and into vantage points for their own defense before they were discovered, but it was too late now. Huns filled the street below them, and he knew that more would be coming. The town was lousy with them, and at the earliest it would be half an hour before the American attack would begin. This, surely, was the end. There were only seven of them, against a town full of Boche. They couldn't expect to last long, but—Dugan's face set sternly, and his body stiffened—they'd do a lot of damage before the end came.

"Get ready with the eggs!" he cried hoarsely.

Seven grim-faced Yanks produced seven serrated Mills bombs, and deliberately yanked the pins.

Like cornered rats—and fully as vicious—the little band waited, staring eyes fixed upon the street below—as several columns of shadowy forms moved steadily toward them. Closer and closer they came, until the narrow street seemed to be full of them; and then Dugan's sharp cry rang out:

"Let 'em have 'em!"

A shower of grenades fell into the street; the staccato roar of their explosions followed the blinding flash, and instantly pandemonium reigned. Hoarse commands blended with shrill screams of pain as the wildly disorganized Boche units milled about, too stunned by the unexpectedness of the thing that had happened to be really conscious of it.

"Once again!" screamed Dugan. "Give 'em the eggs!"

Frantically, the Yanks jerked pins and flung the hissing bombs with deadly accuracy into the gray maelstrom below.

More hysterical screams, more guttural voices shrieking unintelligible commands. But this was too much. Here, in the very heart of their own positions, they were being showered with death, and the frenzied panic which resulted

was something that not even the sternest Prussian discipline could combat. The Boche ranks broke and scampered in wildest disorder and confusion.

Again Dynamite Dugan whirled upon his men. "We've only got one chance," he screamed hoarsely, "but we've got to take it. Get those Maxims down into the street! *Hurry!*"

THE Yanks leaped to the guns and raced down the stairs and into the street. Instinct and training, rather than any conscious planning, sent them to the nearest cover, where quick, expert hands mounted the guns behind the heaped debris. Drab flashes sped back into the building and almost instantly reappeared with ammunition boxes, flinging them down beside each of the guns. Tabends of belts were fed into the feed-boxes, roller-handles clanked, hard palms smacked against the hollow handles. The guns were ready—just in time.

Reorganized by cursing, reviling officers, spurred on by fear and desperation, the Boche came back. But they made the mistake of coming in close formation, and four Maxim guns tore into them like a giant scythe.

Sheets of steel-jacketed lead swept the street in both directions as Yank gunners in enemy gray jammed in the trigger knobs and the guns leaped and throbbed in response.

Again the Boche fell back, to the accompaniment of hysterically screamed commands from frenzied *unterofficiers*. And on the instant of their going, Dynamite Dugan leaped to his feet. In response to his shrieked command, the men gathered up the guns once more and with Dugan in the lead raced with them to the nearest street intersection.

"Now!" screamed Dugan. "Set 'em up! Four ways!"

It was a masterful bit of work, masterfully carried out. The four guns could sweep the streets in four directions and so long as they could keep those guns in action no enemy could come into those streets and live.

At any minute now the Yank line

down by the river would be leaving their fox holes to move upon the town. They would come with automatic rifles and machine guns blazing, and these Yanks would be trapped between the two fires, unless....

"Two men!" yelled Dugan, and indicated two who crouched beside the guns. "Skin outa them monkey suits, and beat it back to our lines—and don't stop for no lead. Tell 'em we're in here, and tell 'em it'll be *our* firing they heat. And tell 'em, for cripes sake, to come on the run—before the Krauts get a chance to bring in more guns. *Get goin'!*"

Five Yanks left now, and four of them crouched behind the handles of the Maxims. Dugan became a one-man crew for four guns. The Germans came on again.

They came stealthily this time; stalking, like tigers, upon their prey, hugging the shadows, darting like lightning from one bit of cover to another; and this time they came prepared.

Automatic rifles blazed, and the bullets ricocheted screechingly against the pile of masonry behind which the Yanks had taken refuge.

CR-AMM!

There was a blaze right in front of them, and a sudden breath-taking surge of hot air struck their faces. *Potato-mashers!*

Br-r-r-r-rt.

An automatic rifle spurted viciously. Something struck Dugan in the chest and spun him about like a top. The breath was knocked from his body and he lay gasping where he had fallen.



A GAIN the Maxims blazed defiance; four guns working in unison.

Dugan saw Tim Kirk's questioning eyes upon him, saw the corporal start to leave his gun, but waved him back, and managed a painful grin. They'd have to hit him a damn sight harder than that to put him "out".

His fingers fumbled at his breast and came into contact with the twisted, jagged bit of metal which protruded through the gray cloth. Bewilderedly he yanked it loose. His eyes fastened upon it—and then Dynamite Dugan grinned.

It was an Iron Cross! A German decoration which had been in the breast pocket of the uniform he was wearing, and that German medal had deflected the bullet and saved a Yank's life. He thrust it back into the pocket and flung himself again beside the Maxims.

Hours seemed to pass, and all the while those four Boche guns spat vicious bursts of fire at every sign of movement, raking the streets with a withering, ripping deluge of bullets. And all the while Dugan moved from gun to gun, feeding fresh belts of ammunition into the feed-boxes. His shattered left arm seemed weighted with lead and the numbing pain in his side seemed to have extended all over his body.

Huge black splotches danced before his eyes. The stench of warm blood which soaked all one side of his blouse sickened him, and his head swam dizzily. Everything was whirling about in circles.

CR-AMMM!

Another potato-masher, and one of the Maxims toppled over on its side as its gunner sprawled limply over the handles.

With the last bit of his strength, Dugan righted the gun, dropped behind it and gripped the handles. He felt its convulsive jerking as he rammed in the knob, but in spite of all that he could do things were turning black in front of him. He felt hot and weak, and desperately sick.

He realized, dully, that there was shouting and confusion all about him, and it seemed that there were millions of men who had surged up around them from somewhere behind the Maxims' position—blurred figures in olive drab who came on line with them, passed them, and kept on going.

Dugan's hands fell away from the gun handles. He toppled over on his side.

The cold, wet street felt soothing and comfortable against his face, and it seemed that his body didn't hurt any more.

DYNAMITE DUGAN opened his eyes and blinked owlshly. He seemed to be lying in some sort of a trough, a very comfortable canvas trough, and the blurred face which bent over him seemed, somehow, vaguely familiar. He studied it intently for a moment, and slowly recollection dawned upon him.

"Oh! Hello there, Doc," he muttered feebly. "I—I told you I'd be—back."

"You're back all right. I've just been trying to figure you out—but I recognize you now. You're the guy that socked one of my men and damn near broke his jaw."

Dugan grinned, weakly.

"What I *ought* to do," the voice went on, "is throw you out of my dressing station—or send you to Leavenworth, but—" Dugan wondered, vaguely, what the captain of the Medical Corps was laughing about. "Some damn fool major came along," the voice went on, "and told me to be sure and get you fixed up because you and some other crazy fool who was with you had been recommended for commissions and—well, I'm an-

other of these guys that always obeys orders."

It required a long time for this to filter through Dugan's returning consciousness.

"Who was the other 'crazy fool'?" he asked.

"I don't know," The M.O. grinned, "but here's a note he left for you."

Dugan took the folded sheet of paper which the officer handed to him and managed, with some difficulty, to make out the message:

Listen, Dynamite: For cripes sake hurry up and get back with the outfit. I've got a swell idea for going A.W.O.L.—Tim Kirk.

"That's my buddy," said Dugan. "He's one swell guy."

"Yeah?" barked the M.O. "Well, maybe he is, but to my way of thinking, you're both just damn, crazy, reckless, hell-bent-for-trouble...."

The voice rambled on, but Dugan was getting tired again. His fingers stole toward the pocket of his blouse and came out gripping a bent and twisted Iron Cross which he extended toward the medical officer.

"Here," he said, wearily, "I told you I'd bring you a souvenir. Stuff this in your mouth and shut up. I want to go to sleep."

Arthur Guy Empey

Will have a sparkling novelet

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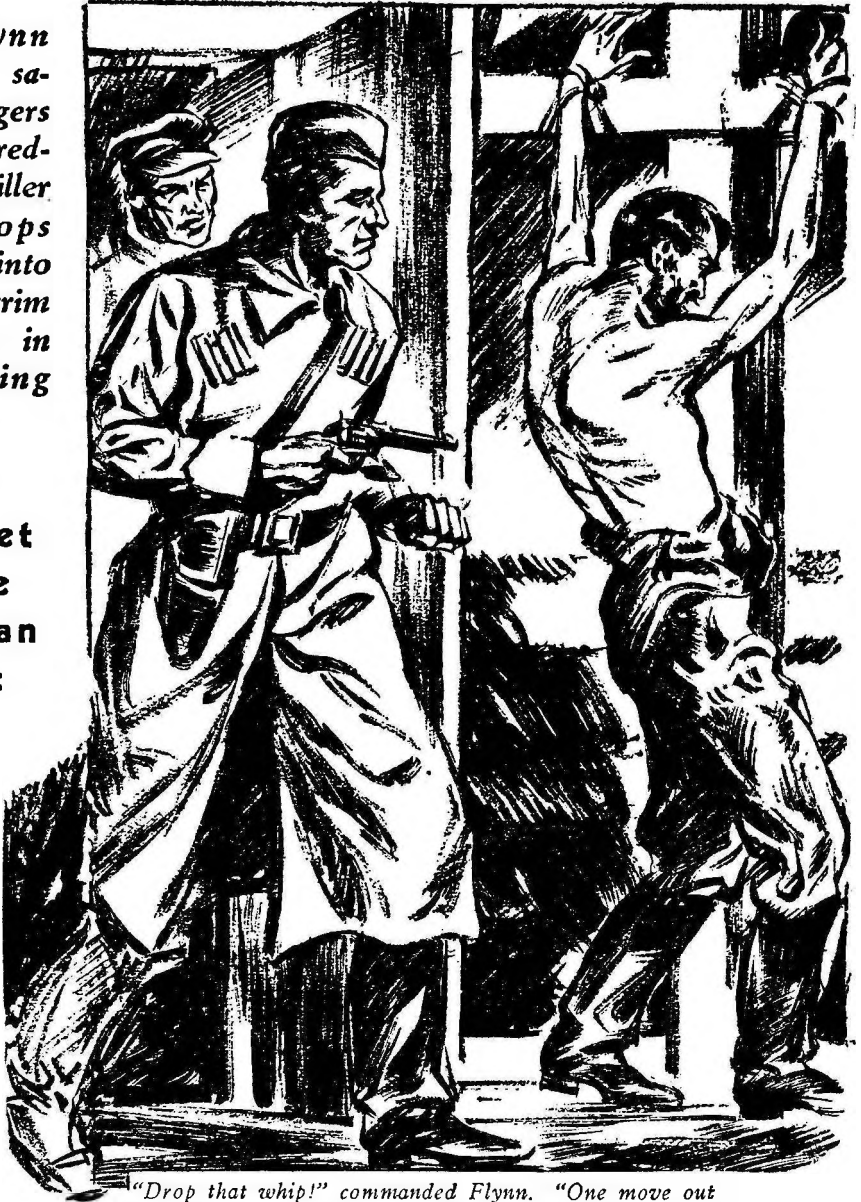
on sale December 10.

RED SABERS

Sergt. Flynn leads his sabber-swingers against a red-masked killer and gallops headlong into a maze of grim adventure in this thrilling

War
Novelet
of the
Siberian
Front

by
Capt.
H. G.
FRY



"Drop that whip!" commanded Flynn. "One move out of you or your buddies and I'll drill your yellow hide."

CHAPTER I

THE GENERAL'S DOG-ROBBER

GENERAL HAYES, the stocky, gray-haired commander of the American Siberian Expedition, stood at the window of his office in

Vladivostok and stared morosely over the snowy, wind-swept grounds and temporary barracks that made up the bleak landscape outside. On a tall flag staff the Stars and Stripes whipped sullenly in icy blasts from the frozen harbor,

of the STEPPES



A stream of curses volleyed from the big Russian's lips. His men tensed, ready to spring upon the disguised Yank.

where English, Japanese and American battleships lay in water kept open by the constant churning of puffing ice-breakers.

“Aw, General!” Sergeant Flynn expostulated. “I don’t want to command a bunch of chambermaids any more. I

want to go to Nickholsk and help lick the Red Joker.”

The general swung around with a snort of impatience. Frosty eyes from under shaggy brows bored into the soldier who stood in front of the cluttered

desk. The enlisted man had a look of entreaty upon his freckled face which was topped off by an unruly mop of sandy hair. He was a wiry alert young person of medium size with very bowed legs.

"For the third and last time—no!" General Hayes' voice rose almost to an emphatic shout upon the delayed negative. "Take those boots of mine and have one of your dumb strikers shine them properly. They look as if they had been smeared with grease."

"But, General—" Flynn started to plead further. The general's roar interrupted him.

"Take those boots and get out!"

With a look of supreme disgust on his freckled face the soldier gingerly picked up the boots and swaggered out of the office, every line of his wiry bow-legged figure betraying outraged contempt for this menial duty. Reaching his squadron, Flynn flung the boots upon the floor with a resounding clatter and disregarded them while he draped himself disconsolately upon his bunk.

The Irishman was disgusted with the entire expedition. It was understood that the Americans were to aid the White Russians in their fight against the murdering Red Bolsheviks but the Americans found themselves scattered along the Trans-Siberian railway guarding it and the supplies stored by the old Tzarist government. There was nothing to fight except a few bands of fugitive Bolsheviks, bandits and malcontents. Even this was denied Flynn, tied in Vladivostok to the general's apron strings as sergeant in command of orderlies for headquarters officers.

And now in Nickholzk, only a few hours up the railroad from Vladivostok, a band of Bolsheviks was marauding under a fellow called the Red Joker. With this opportunity for a real scrap so close at hand Flynn, who had ridden the Texas ranges as a cow hand, who had shot it out with rustlers and Mex bandits, must sit calmly in Vladivostok as a glorified dog-robber riding herd

over a few shirking he-chambermaids.

Flynn jumped from his bunk and put on his muskrat hat and sheepskin overcoat. Kicking aside the offending boots he slammed his way out of the building through the snow toward the railroad station. He was hungry for news of what might be taking place in Nickholzk.

Around the newly arrived train Flynn merged with the surging soldiers of many nationalities, short, brown Japanese, tall, strutting Cossacks, aloof English and talkative French. All were asking about the new menace up the road, the Red Joker.

"Hi there, Flynn!" yelled an American soldier just alighting from a box-car.

"Hogan!" Flynn rushed over to the lanky soldier. "How're things in Nickholzk?"

"Not so good," Hogan answered, wrinkling his narrow forehead upon which encroached stubbly black hair. "I brought back a stiff that the Red Joker done in. Want to see 'im?"

Flynn followed the other into the small boxcar where Hogan drew back a blanket from a prone figure.

"My Gawd!" Flynn gasped, staggering back from the horribly mutilated body. The dead face was set in a distorted grimace of pain and a look of frightful horror seemed frozen in the glazed, half-opened eyes. "It's Gallagher! We drank vodka with him in the Golden Horn cabaret not two weeks ago, remember? What happened?"

"All we know is that he didn't come back to barracks one night," Hogan explained. "The next morning we found him frozen in the streets of Nickholzk. See that mark on his forehead?" The soldier pointed. There was an indelible purplish mark of Russian characters printed on the skin as though a rubber stamp had been set upon it. "That's the mark of the Red Joker. He sticks it on every guy he kills."

"My Gawd!" Flynn swore again and anger burned within him.

"I got to turn poor Gallagher over to

the medicos." Hogan re-covered the dead soldier. "Then give the general a message from Captain Mansfield."

FLYNN waited until the lanky black-browed private was relieved of his death charge. How to get to Nickholsk? Flynn had exhausted every argument on the general as well as the old officer's patience. Of course, the Irishman could go AWOL but as soon as he showed up in Nickholsk without orders the officers would ship him back.

"You birds've been up there more'n a week, now," Flynn said when they started trudging through the snow away from the teeming station. "Ain't you got a crack at the Red Joker yet?"

"Hell, no!" Hogan spat a wad of tobacco on the white ground. "No one knows who he is nor where he is. We got a battalion of Japs up there with us and a squadron of mounted Cossacks and they can't find him either."

"Is that why they call 'im the Red Joker?"

"That's what he calls himself," Hogan explained. "That mark on Gallager means Red Joker in Russian. He has attacked Cossack and Jap patrols and they say he wears a red cape and a mask with a big red beard showing under it. All his men are masked and wear capes. Some of the peasants agree on that but mostly they won't say anything."

"Who're the peasants for?" Flynn asked. "Us or the Bolshes?"

"I don't know. There ain't no real Bolshevik army nearer'n Irkutsk, a thousand miles away. Captain Mansfield—that's our company commander—thinks the European Bolsheviks sent the Red Joker to stir up trouble between the peasants and the Allies. If the Bolshes could get all the peasants around here on their side they could cut the railroad so supplies couldn't get up to Kolchac's White troops and the Allies. Then the murdering Red army could come right in and take the whole country. Get it?"

"Clear as mud," the bow-legged Irishman grumbled. "Can't our gang trail

the Red Joker in the snow and wipe his gang out?"

"That's what the Japs and Cossacks've been trying to do," Hogan answered. "The Joker guy and his bunch attacked some of the Allies' patrols since we been there. The Japs and Cossacks marched out and trailed him to a village which put up a scrap. What the Japs and Cossacks done to that place was plenty after they took it. They burned it down and killed everybody—men, women and children. I seen it!"

"Weren't you birds in on it?" Flynn asked.

"Nope. I guess the Cossacks think we're too soft hearted. When they go into action they clean up everybody and they know Americans won't stand for that—not women and children. So they didn't take us. But the Red Joker escaped because he put his mark on Gallager only last night."

"It looks like a punk kind of a war," Flynn growled disgustedly. "But it's better'n being a lily-fingered dog-robber. Is that all you know?"

"Yep. We got the Cossacks and Japs with us against the Red Joker and his gang, whoever and wherever they're at. And in between is the peasants. Gawd only knows where they stand."

"Here's headquarters." Flynn led the way into the unpainted building. "There's the general's office. Go in and do your stuff. I'm going to see the sour old buzzard afterwards and make him send me to Nickholsk."

Flynn hung outside of the door as Hogan made his report to the general. When the messenger came out the Irishman marched grimly into the veteran's lair.

"What! You here again?" The general, seated behind his desk, looked up at the freckled face. "Where are my boots?"

"I want to go to Nickholsk to find—" Flynn began doggedly.

"I know, I know," General Hayes interrupted harshly. "To find the Red Joker. If I hear you say that again—Get out of here! No, wait!" He scrib-

bled upon a paper in front of him and handed it to the Irishman. "Take this to the Chief of Staff. It's a list of men Captain Mansfield wants transferred up to Nickholsk. Take it and then bring my boots. Not a word more! Out!"

Flynn marched out with his disgruntled, bow-legged swagger more pronounced than ever. On his way he suddenly thought of perusing the list of names. He hesitated as an idea illuminated the interior of his sandy-covered head.

Taking a nibbled stub of a pencil from his pocket Flynn very carefully appended his name to the penciled memorandum and blithely wended his way between the desks of clicking typewriters. It was improbable that the general would see the mimeographed orders transferring the men to Captain Mansfield's company. The chief of staff always checked it and if he accepted this list all would be well until the general noticed Flynn's absence and inquired about him. This stumped the wiry Irishman until his fertile brain gave birth to another brilliant scheme.

In the course of an hour Flynn again appeared in the general's office, this time bearing a pair of glassily polished boots. The Irishman had worked industriously himself upon them to bring out the ultimate mirror-like shininess. The general grunted with surprised satisfaction as he noted them.

"I ain't feeling so good, General," Flynn ventured apologetically. "Could I have a week off to lay around the barracks? I ain't had no furlough this year."

"Har-r-rumph!" the old war horse cleared his throat raucously and glared with suspicion at the sandy-haired, freckle-faced orderly. His frosty eyes softened as he took in the dejected, downcast person before him. No one could so arouse the general to spasms of anger as the Irishman, yet, for some reason, the old officer harbored a sneaking affection for the impulsive soldier. "All right, all right," he snorted gruffly.

"I'll be damned glad to have you off my hands for a while and know you're out of trouble. But one bit of funny business and I'll see you get the limit allowed by the Articles of War. If that's understood, get out!"

CHAPTER II

UNFRIENDLY ALLIES



THE next morning Flynn drilled upon the snow of the American compound in Nickholsk. He rather liked Captain Mansfield who put them through their close and extended order drill.

There was more of the attitude of a football player in the officer's methods than the stereotyped, hide-bound drill master.

The only other officer, First Lieutenant Batty, hovered fussily on the outskirts of the company, petulantly admonishing the men for petty faults. This paunchy, little officer with flabby jowls, quivering as he trotted about, irritated the Irish soldier whose freckled nose wrinkled up belligerently whenever Batty minced busily near him.

After the drill the gray-haired, straight-backed first sergeant Jennings barked out the customary commands for dismissal. Flynn was not so sure he would get along with the top kick because the Irishman had not had much success with soldiers of the old school who demanded that orders be obeyed to the letter.

It was Hogan whom Flynn approached in front of the long, low, log barracks after putting up their rifles and equipment.

"Let's go downtown and see what we can find out from the peasants," Flynn suggested. "I've an idear some of 'em know where the Red Joker is."

"Yeah?" Hogan queried derisively and bit a huge chunk out of a black plug of tobacco. "Ain't you read the bulletin board? No one's allowed out since Gallagher's been done in."

"How come?"

"That's Captain Mansfield's orders," Hogan answered. "The Japs and Cosacks told him not to let us fraternize with 'em. That was the trouble with Gallagher. He was always going to their parties and lugging some *barishna* (girl) around."

"All right, stay in and obey orders," Flynn retorted. He patted a bulge at his pocket. "I hope the Red Joker makes a try at me like he did at Gallagher."

The Irishman disregarded the other's warning and set off down the packed snow of the boardwalk. Occasional sleighs drawn by three horses, a huge, wooden half-circle rising from the shafts above the center horse's neck, glided rapidly over the snow to the shouts and cracking whips of *izvostchics* (drivers). Bearded peasants in matted furs of goat, deer or horse gazed curiously at the American soldier and gave way meekly on the narrow walk.

Flynn's attention was drawn some distance in front of him. Down the wooden walk, which was wide enough for two people to pass comfortably if each gave way, came a short, slender, Japanese officer strutting stiffly in the center of the trodden path. Peasants meeting him hastily left the walk to stand aside in the deep snow.

It aggravated Flynn to see this little bird hog the place and it further enraged him as it became apparent the Oriental was intending to push him off in the same way. Flynn resolved to render all the prescribed courtesy of the American soldier and no more. He gave way to his half of the walk and strode grimly along toward the Japanese who still held in its exact center. At six paces, Flynn's right hand went up to salute but his left shoulder hunched for the inevitable collision.

With a shriek of rage the Japanese officer floundered in the deep snow but squirmed immediately to his feet and his two-handed sword flashed in the wintry sunlight. The Irishman who had stood grinning as the arrogant officer sprawled in the drifted snow now catapulted as

though released from a spring upon the Jap. The keen weapon fell from fingers numbed by Flynn's vise-like grasp. The Oriental spat, scratched and howled like a vicious cat.

"Here, soldier!" a voice burst out in petulant command. "Stand back from that officer. Stand back, I say!"

A *troika* (Russian sleigh) had whirled up and the paunchy figure of Lieutenant Batty tumbled fussily out of it. Flynn reluctantly loosed the Oriental and stepped back upon the sidewalk. With a screaming flow of unintelligible invective the Japanese seized his sword and raised it for a murderous slash at the soldier.

Flynn's right hand made a slight movement toward his pocket, as he sidestepped the flashing blow, coming up with a blue Colt revolver, the black muzzle staring like an eye at the suddenly hesitant officer.

"Careful now, you dirty skunk!" Flynn's voice purred. Although there was a freckled grin upon his lean face his eyes glinted smokily. "Make one more move with that cheese knife of yours and I'll—"

"Give me that gun, soldier!" Lieutenant Batty reached for it.

Flynn brushed the officer aside.

"I will not," he growled.

"I'll have you thrown in the guard house," Lieutenant Batty fumed, "for attacking a Japanese officer, carrying a weapon off duty, and—"

"Say," Flynn broke in. "Are you going to take the side of this bird against me? Have I got to run whenever these toy officers make a pass at me? He started this scrap and if he wants to finish it we'll lay off our arsenals and have it out."

The Japanese rattled his sword in its scabbard and shrieked in furious, broken English to the American officer.

"He insult my honor—honor of Japanese officer!" he yelled. "He be shot—hung—" English words failed him and he spat out malevolent, ill-sounding names in his own tongue.

A circle of bearded peasants gathered

at a respectful distance to watch this strange encounter. More were coming up to swell the crowd. Lieutenant Batty looked around with a worried expression on his flabby countenance.

"I order you back to your barracks under arrest, Sergeant Flynn!" Batty stormed. "I will take Major Oguchi to complain to Captain Mansfield against you." The American officer addressed the Jap. "If you will come with me, please, Major."

FLYNN pocketed his old revolver and watched the two officers get into the sleigh and drive off. The bloated half-baked ninny! Taking sides with the Jap against one of his own soldiers. And the American officer fairly bowed and scraped before the snaky, little Jap.

Now there'd be hell to pay! If he went back to the guard house a swell chance he'd have of finding the Red Joker. On with the search until something turned up.

Several of the peasants had ventured closer in their curiosity.

"Say, Whiskers," Flynn called to one of the nearest in pidgin Russian. "Where can I get a drink of vodka? Have one with me?"

For a moment the peasant addressed hung back suspiciously, but finally came forward with his fur hat in hand, bowing humbly.

"This way, *Gospodin*," the peasant mumbled, leading the way along the walk. Flynn joined him. "There is a man who will wish to speak to you."

"Who?" Flynn asked in surprise. A sudden thought came into his head. "The Red Joker?"

"*Nyet, nyet!*" the peasant protested. He glanced about furtively. The crowd behind had melted away. "He will tell you."

"Lead on, Whiskers," Flynn growled and felt of the bulge at his pocket. Was this the way Gallagher had gotten into a trap?

They walked in silence until they were abreast of a large, imposing brick house surrounded by a spacious, snow-covered

yard. The peasant quickened his pace.

"The house of Oguchi," he muttered.

"The Jap officer I slapped down?" Flynn asked. "He does himself pretty swell, don't he?"

"*Nyet*. It is the trader Oguchi, brother of the Japanese commandant. He is as fat as their brass idol, Buddha; fattened off of the poor peasants. *Chort!*"

They turned down a side street and entered a dingy place over whose door hung the Russian cafe sign. Inside at rough tables sat a number of peasants drinking vodka; a hum of conversation rose in the smelly atmosphere. A complete silence greeted the newcomers when their presence was discovered. Chairs scraped on the bare floor.

"Up the stairs," the peasant directed. Flynn held back, surveying the room.

"If there's any one wants to talk to me bring him down here." The Irishman walked over to an empty table in a corner of the dim, ill-favored cafe. From there he could keep every one under observation without fear of a knife in the back. Gallagher must have been careless.

Flynn's companion talked in low whispers with the greasy, bearded proprietor, about whose tremendous paunch hung a dirty apron. This person waddled up the stairs and returned shortly with another in tow.

From his table Flynn looked over the approaching man with interest. He looked cleaner and more prosperous than any of the other occupants of the cafe. His large, vigorous figure was pleasingly set off by a grayish belted blouse and dark trousers tucked into black boots. Flynn felt prepared to like this quiet man with deep-set, sad eyes, curly, gray-streaked hair and Van Dyke beard.

The Irishman stood up to greet him but kept an alert watch for possible treachery. His guide had joined others at another table. A hum of excited comment began to rise again in the murky room.

"Speak slowly," Flynn said in his pidgin Russian. The immaculate peasant

had shaken hands and plunged into a torrent of his native tongue. "What's your name?"

"Petrovski Gregorovitch, *Gospodin*," the man answered and continued slowly in simple language. "You made the Japanese commandant, Major Oguchi, give way on the sidewalk? You, who are not an officer?"

"I did," Flynn grinned. "And I'll do it again if he tries to push me off. An American soldier don't get out of the way for nobody."

Petrovski clucked wonderingly and stroked his trim beard. Ordering a bottle of vodka from the bloated proprietor who hovered about anxiously, the Irishman motioned his new companion to a chair.

"Who's the Red Joker?" Flynn asked abruptly after the vodka appeared before them. "And where is he?"

"*Gospodin!*" Petrovski exclaimed, and glanced around apprehensively. "No one knows who nor where. He is a devil!"

"Who're the peasants for?" the Irishman persisted. "Us or the Bolsheviks?"

Petrovski, with his sad eyes, contemplated the soldier.

"We, the peasants," he explained with studied slowness, "merely want peace—peace to plant and gather our crops, carry on our business and live our lives. Any government that will allow us that will have our support."

"Ain't this government good enough?"

"*Gospodin*, the only government we have is the one established by Ataman Menchekov, the leader of the Cossacks here. It is a savage, military government supported by his force and the Japanese troops. He is worse than the Red Joker."

"Ain't you got any idea who the Red Joker is?" Flynn continued to persist.

"I know this much," Petrovski answered with unexpected savageness. "He is not a friend of the peasants."

"But," the soldier argued, remembering what Hogan had told him in Vladivostok, "he is always traced to one of your villages."

"That is a lie!" the gray-bearded Russian exclaimed. He controlled himself with an effort. "Let me explain. Before the Revolution, I owned the trade of the Nickholsk district, furs, hides and agricultural produce. Then came the Revolution, the Japanese and the Cossacks. An order was issued that everything must be sold to the trader Oguchi and he paid poorly or not at all. Then—"


"What's that got to do with the Red Joker?" Flynn interrupted impatiently.

"This!" Petrovski leaned forward over the table. "Some villages rebelled against being cheated by the Japanese trader. They refused to give up their produce but sold it to me. As soon as this happened, the Red Joker appeared. He did not attack us. No, he is too sly. He pretended to attack the Cossack and Japanese patrols in the locality of the disgruntled village but—bear this in mind—we have never seen the dead bodies of Cossacks and Japanese! The Cossacks and Japanese send out a punitive expedition and Menchekov's men say they trail the Red Joker to the village. It is burnt and all living things massacred!"

Petrovski stopped once more and laid a hand upon Flynn's arm.

"Well?" the soldier prompted. "What's the idear?"

"The Red Joker is an ally of the Cossacks and Japanese!"

 FLYNN'S freckled face screwed up in doubt. Yet, the man seemed terribly earnest and there was a ring of truth in it. Hadn't Hogan said that Captain Mansfield believed the Red Joker was not actually one of the peasants but was sent by the European Bolsheviks to stir up trouble between the peasants and the Allies. This was the first he had heard about any trade troubles.

"The Cossacks and Japanese use the Red Joker as an excuse to attack villages refusing to trade with the Japanese merchant," Petrovski went on

earnestly. "No other villages are molested."

"Why didn't you tell that to the American commander?" the soldier asked.

"If we went to him he might turn us over to Menchekov as prisoners. No one ever comes out alive from the Cossack prison, and the bodies show that they suffered before death."

Flynn's train of thought was broken by a sudden scraping of chairs on the bare floor and a complete blanketing of conversation. He saw his companion staring at something near the door as were all the other occupants of the room. Flynn swung around to see what it was.

There in the doorway stood a huge, Cossack officer with a long, scarred face, hairless except for pendulous mustachios. Straight, black brows over piercing eyes set widely from an aquiline beak gave him a fierce, hawk-like appearance. His furred *kubanka* was set at a cocky angle on his head, his sky-blue blouse was crossed by golden, cartridge-filled bandoliers and wide, red stripes ran down the outer seam of his riding breeches into the black boots. The silver scabbarded saber and Tartar dagger girded at the belt must have been worth a fortune of rubles.

"Ataman Menchekov!" Petrovski whispered hoarsely. "He comes this way!"

Flynn watched the Cossack officer swagger toward them with a musical jingle of roweled spurs. The bird sure had these peasants bluffed; they cringed as though expecting a blow as he passed among the tables.

Menchekov's hawk-like gaze, the drooping, upper lids half covering staring pupils, fixed itself upon Flynn and the Irishman felt, rather than saw, sardonic amusement. It made Flynn feel that his person was not all right or rather that something about him was ridiculously amusing.

Then for the first time Menchekov seemed to recognize Petrovski. Coming into a dim, dirty-windowed room after the glitter of snow outside had half

blinded the Cossack so that only the uniform of the American stood out.

Before Flynn could move the huge Cossack had smashed the cowering peasant full in the face, sending him tumbling to the floor amidst the wreckage of his chair. Menchekov leaped after him and placed a booted foot upon the prone man's neck, shouting with harsh laughter as Petrovski lay still not daring to stir.

Flynn shoved his chair back. Petrovski was his guest for the time being and the Irishman had formed an intense dislike for the gaudily dressed bully. There was an expected sigh, almost a gasp, from the patrons of the cafe as Flynn moved slowly around the table.

The mocking laughter suddenly ended with a bellow of rage as Flynn swung the Cossack about by the arm so abruptly that the officer's *kubanka* flew off, exposing a shaven head. It was probably the first time since he had become an ataman that any one had dared lay hand upon him.

"That's a friend of mine, Hard-boiled!" Flynn glowered pugnaciously at the huge Cossack. "Pick on me if you feel like fighting!"

In answer Menchekov swung a brawny paw at the soldier's face but Flynn ducked easily and lashed out with a hard-knuckled fist full upon the Cossack's jaw. There was a howl of pain and fury and the huge Russian's heavy, curved blade leaped from its scabbard with a flicker of swishing light. Flynn sprang back to avoid the whirling weapon and in his hand appeared his business-like revolver. Menchekov paused uncertainly with his blade still upraised for another murderous sweep.

"Two can play at that game, Hard-boiled," the American's voice purred. "Come on if you want to."

For a moment the two confronted each other tensed for conflict when quite unexpectedly the Cossack seemed to swallow his rage at the insult. His previous attitude of harboring a sinister joke on the American returned. He sheathed his saber and bowed mockingly.

"*Kharashaw, Amerikanski!*" the harsh, rasping voice of the Cossack grated upon the ears like a tortured bass viol. He essayed a bit of peculiarly accented English. "You weel—reemember thees—in agonee!"

CHAPTER III

WHO IS THE RED JOKER?

HURRIEDLY the Irishman walked out of the cafe and down the snowy street toward the American barracks. Somehow or other he must clear himself with Mansfield on today's unfortunate happenings and get the American officer to mount him and a few men with the mission of tracking down the Red Joker. He had gone at it all wrong trying to find anything prowling around the town of Nickholok. The place to find that murdering skunk was out where he did his dirty work.

As he arrived at the barracks he met Jennings coming out with a squad of men carrying rifles. The old non-com halted his detachment and with arms akimbo faced the Irishman, a scowl of disapproval on his leathery face.

"I was just coming to look for you, guy," the gray-haired sergeant growled. "The captain wants you and wants you quick. The Jap and Cossack commanders're with him and what they've been telling him about you's plenty."

"All right," Flynn said wearily. "Put another bunk in the guardhouse and see that the sheets are clean."

"You won't have to worry about our guardhouse, guy," the non-com informed him, caustically. "It'll be Vladivostok for yours."

"He can't send me without the general's orders," Flynn retorted.

"Guy, don't you know Captain Mansfield's the general's nephew?" the sergeant asked. "The general thinks the sun rises and sets where our C. O. is."

"My Gawd!" Flynn gasped.

Now the general would get an earful! He entered the barracks dejectedly. Hogan gave him an 'I told you so' look. Voices were coming from the orderly

room, the rasping bass of Menchekov, the peculiar cat-like shrillness of Oguchi and in the lulls the unhurried drawl of Captain Mansfield. Around the squad-room not a sound came from the alert soldiers listening to the conference.

Flynn cast his fur hat and sheepskin coat on his bunk and knocked at the orderly room door. Lieutenant Batty's petulant permission to enter answered and the Irishman swaggered in to take what was coming to him.

Captain Mansfield sat back of a rough board table which served as a desk, feet sprawled out lazily, a quizzical smile upon his regular-featured face. On one side of him lounged the huge, gaudily garbed Cossack, one hand upon the hilt of his saber and the other idly pulling at his long mustachios. On the opposite side of the American officer Major Oguchi perched stiffly on the edge of his chair, his narrow, slant eyes, beadily bright, fixed malevolently upon the Irish soldier. The short, paunchy Batty busied himself fussily at another table with some papers.

"Sergeant Flynn," Captain Mansfield began in his drawling manner. The Irishman braced himself for the worst although his officer's attitude was far from harsh. "These officers have complained to me about your conduct and Lieutenant Batty has also substantiated some of it. Before deciding what to do with you I want to hear your version of what happened today."

This rather surprised Flynn. It had been his experience that when getting into trouble the officers generally jumped on him and bawled him out without a hearing, slamming him in the guardhouse when the fiery Irishman dared to retort. His heart warmed to the genial American officer and Flynn began his recital of the unvarnished facts.

Major Oguchi interjected contradictory remarks but was silenced by an upheld hand of Mansfield. With a clank of saber and jingle of spurs, Menchekov arose and strode over to the Japanese, with whom he held a low-voiced conversation.

"He's a liar, Captain!" Lieutenant Batty broke in once when Flynn described the fat little American's part. "He's—"

"That'll do, Lieutenant," Mansfield drawled. "I've heard your story. Go on, Flynn."

When the narrative was done Mansfield joined the Cossack and Japanese officers in a conference. Flynn saw Mansfield shake his head decisively as Oguchi argued with shrill invective. Then Menchekov's booming voice dominated and the Jap after some expostulation nodded and interpreted to the American officer who also seemed to agree.



"SERGEANT FLYNN," Captain Mansfield turned to the bow-legged Irishman. "The military laws of foreign countries are much stricter than ours but these officers have agreed to accept an apology from you if you promise good behavior."

"All right, Captain," he agreed with a wry look as if the words tasted bitter in his mouth. "Tell 'em I'm sorry. If it wasn't for you I'd see 'em in— well, I apologize."

A warning look on his commanding officer's face stopped the impulsive Irishman from spoiling his apology. Mansfield diplomatically elaborated upon the soldier's regret of the unfortunate incidents of the day.

Major Oguchi nodded sullenly in dissatisfied acceptance. The Cossack, however, when this was interpreted to him by the Japanese, seemed not only perfectly satisfied but to be in exceptionally good humor. Flynn again felt vaguely as though Menchekov was laughing at him.

The Cossack ataman rumbled in his harsh bass to Oguchi.

"The ataman says," Major Oguchi interpreted with a malicious glance at Flynn, "that the soldier does not know he protected the man who is suspected

of being the Red Joker, the murdering Bolshevik leader."

"By Gorry!" Flynn exclaimed but Mansfield motioned to him for silence.

"Is that your opinion, too?" the American officer asked.

"It is," the Japanese answered in his stilted schoolboy English. "Petrovski Gregorovitch is a *kulac* (rich peasant). He ruled all the trade of this territory but now my brother has a concession from the present provisional government and his better business methods are ruining Petrovski's monopoly."

"But would a rich trader go in with the Bolsheviks who ban private trade and divide all wealth?" Mansfield drawled an objection.

Major Oguchi rattled his sword impatiently.

"That is but a slogan to attract the masses. If the Red Joker succeeds in dominating this section he will not want for wealth nor will he divide with his men."

"Why don't you put 'im in the jug if you know he's this Joker bird?" Flynn wanted to know.

Oguchi glared at the forward soldier and turned to the American officer who also frowned.

"We have never before been able to lay hands on this man," the Japanese snarled. "Thanks to this meddling soldier, he is still free. These peasants all favor him and the Bolsheviks and I must again ask that your men do not associate with them. They may become imbued with socialistic teachings and mutiny."

"That has been ordered and this soldier will be punished for violating it," Captain Mansfield returned gently. "But this Petrovski—he has no red beard and the Joker is reported to have one."

Menchekov's booming laugh grated upon their ears. He leaned over the Jap and rumbled hoarsely. Major Oguchi seemed to agree and arose.

"The ataman says we have wasted enough time here," the little Jap said in a nasty tone. "He also says that it would be easy for Petrovski to wear a false beard. This *kulac* and his aide, Ivan

Ivanov, are stirring up trouble at Churkin and other villages near there. The Red Joker will show his hand in the locality shortly and when he does—"The Japanese officer hesitated. "We go now."

Mansfield ushered his visitors out of the barracks. When he returned he motioned Flynn to a seat and looked the soldier over with frank skepticism not unmingled with grudging admiration.

"Flynn, I've heard of you from my uncle—from the general," the officer remarked. "He says he is the only officer in the Expedition who can keep you in hand. What in the devil am I going to do with you?"

"I guess I ain't much good, Captain," Flynn's freckled face took on a lugubrious look of penitence. "But I got an idea how to find the Red Joker and that's the bird we want."

"Let's have it," the officer prompted with amused tolerance.

"Captain," Flynn began earnestly. "I ain't a bird to brag, but me and two fellows from Bar-X caught Costello, the Mex bandit, on the border when our whole army and the Rangers fell down. What I done there I can do here, see? Mount me up a few of our foot sloggers and let me go out after him."

Mansfield smiled but sobered suddenly as a thought struck him.

"It may be a good idea to mount up a small detachment," he mused. "Yes, I'll do it. You may pick out a squad of men who can ride and I'll get the horses. Good for patrolling and advance protection if we go out alone—but not on your own hook, Flynn."

"Aw, Captain," the Irishman pleaded. "The only way we can find the Red Joker is out where he ranges. I don't think the peasants are Bolsheviks nor friends of the Joker bird, either. And Petrovski ain't the kind of a guy that would do what Gallager had done to him. He said they wasn't—"

"What did Petrovski have to say?" Mansfield broke in.

Flynn related what he had learned from the sad-eyed *kulac* in the cafe that afternoon. Something of the narrative

stirred a responsive chord in the officer for he nodded musingly to himself and studied his tapping pencil for a while after the soldier finished.

"This is a devil of a mess, I must say," Captain Mansfield spoke at last. "Ataman Menchekov and Major Oguchi claim the Red Joker is one of the peasants and that all of the peasants are his allies. Petrovski says the Red Joker is an ally of the Cossacks and Japanese and that the whole fight is over the trade monopoly of the district.

"But I think," Mansfield drummed on the table with his pencil, "that the Red Joker is an agent of the European Bolsheviks who want to force the peasants here to take sides with them. But no matter who he is, our job is to grab him."

"That's the idear," Flynn agreed. "And if you'll let me range the country with my mounted detachment I'll find out from the peasants where he is. I'll trail him down and when I do—"

"Not so fast, Flynn," the officer interrupted. "Disabuse your mind about going out alone. You're too damned unreliable and would have me in a jam in no time. But I like the scheme of talking it over with the peasants and I'll do that at once. That's all, Flynn."

Flynn went out with mixed feelings. At least he wasn't to be locked up and would have his freedom until the general discovered his whereabouts—say a week at the most. Anything might happen before then. Mansfield was a good egg.

That night the Irishman's sleep was disturbed by a succession of nightmares in which he chased a red-garbed Russian whom he instinctively knew to be the Red Joker across the frozen tundra, into villages and out again, sometimes mounted and sometimes on foot.

At another period in the nightmare, Flynn snatched the mask from his adversary's face and recognized Petrovski. As they fought on with bare hands the face changed to the long mustachioed Menchekov, later to the narrow-eyed, saffron-skinned Oguchi. With victory in

sight his opponent suddenly became Mansfield who smiled with sorrowful disapproval at his combative soldier. Flynn awakened with the distressing question muddling his brain, "Who is the Red Joker?"

CHAPTER IV

ON THE RED TRAIL

THE headquarters building of the American Siberian Expedition in Vladivostok resounded with the roars emanating from General Hayes' office, punctuated by imperative ringing of his desk bell. The Chief of Staff and several of his assistants answered at once and in person.

"Where's Flynn, that bog-trotting Irish striker of mine?"

"Why, General," the Chief of Staff answered placatively, "you had him transferred to the company in Nickholks with those other men. You sent the list in to me by Flynn himself."

"I did like the devil!" roared the general, heatedly. He waved a letter in front of their faces. "This is the first I heard of it. I thought he was sick in quarters. Listen! It's from my nephew, Captain Mansfield." He read between snorts: "I want to thank you for that very valuable addition to my company, Sergeant Flynn, who was your troublesome striker and whom you said no one could handle but yourself. He has already managed in his first day here to fight with Major Oguchi, the Japanese commander, and Ataman Menchekov, the Cossack leader. It's lucky the English and French aren't here or he would have been after them as well. However, I'll be able to use him, I believe, if I can direct his fighting ability along the proper channels."

The general's eyebrows drew down like black thunder.

"His name was on that list," the Chief of Staff reiterated.

"I read it and I say it wasn't!" The general thumped his desk with a knotted fist. "Bring the list here."

"It's been destroyed, sir, but I can get you a copy of the order." The Chief of Staff hurried out of the office and returned very shortly with a sheaf of papers bound for file. "Here it is. Paragraph 21, Special Orders Number 86, these headquarters." And the officer proceeded to read that Sergeant Flynn was to be relieved from his present duties etc., and was transferred to the Provisional Company at Nickholks. He would take the first available transportation and report etc., etc.

"You've let that ignorant Mick make asses of you as well as me!" General Hayes charged vehemently. "Send a wire to Captain Mansfield telling him to return Flynn under guard to me at once. Tell the Judge Advocate to make out charges on every count he can rake up against him. I'll sink him this time so he'll never come up. Get busy!"

They cleared out and left the old veteran rumbling to himself and re-reading the letter from his nephew. He noted that it was dated two days previously and wondered angrily how it had been delayed.

It took a little less than two hours to get a return from the telegram to Nickholks and it did not tend to soothe the general's feelings. It read:

AMERICAN TROOPS PURSUING
RED JOKER STOP WILL DELIVER
MESSAGE WHEN THEY RETURN
(Signed) NOGOTO CHIEF OF STA-
TION.

"I'll have no peace till that Irishman is back here." General Hayes crumpled up the yellow slip. "Send another message to that Jap telegraph chief that I want that telegram sent on to Captain Mansfield regardless of expense, by runner, horse or sleigh. Ask the Judge Advocate if he has those charges ready for me."

The next two days saw Flynn training his men on shaggy Mongolian horses. The Irishman's way of drilling his squad of troopers was not according to the best cavalry tactics but in his experience had stood the test of range warfare. There were no lances nor sabres but

each man was put through a course of mounted pistol practice as well as dismounted action.

Flynn chafed at the delay in getting out on the search for the Red Joker especially as Mansfield's scheme of finding out his whereabouts proved unavailing. Not only did none of the peasants respond to the American's call for a conference but the Japanese and Cossack commanders became quite enraged at his presumption and threatened to ask for his relief.

"If we're here to find the Red Joker, why don't we do something about it?" Flynn grumbled to Jennings. They were standing in the snow in front of their barracks waiting for time to go through the daily morning drills.

"That's the skipper's job," Jennings answered with a shrug. "When he finds out where he's at he'll set us to work. Remember, guy, it ain't your job to think; you're supposed to do what you're told. The officers'll do the thinking and ordering. I suppose there's some of the Red Joker's friends now," Jennings remarked, pointing a mittened hand.

Across the open square in front of the American barracks trudged two dejected peasants in ragged furs driven on by a jeering group of dismounted Cossacks. When the pace did not suit the captors they prodded their prisoners with bayonets and laughed harshly at the screamed protests.

"Wonder where the Cossacks got 'em and where they're taking 'em," Flynn mused.

"You see that low building of logs?" Jennings pointed again. "Near the brick barracks of the Cossacks. That's their prison. Before we were restricted some of our guys used to pass by there and they say you could always hear some of the prisoners hollering. Torture, I guess, with whips. You know those knouts with many lashes and wire tips?"

"I seen 'em," Flynn acknowledged. "Gawd help those birds! If the peasants knew where the Red Joker is I guess that'd make 'em tell, huh?"

"Seems so. But I don't trust them Cossacks any further than the peasants. Look at those uniforms. None alike. They say Menchekov's gang is made up of Cossacks from all over Siberia and Russia. Guys that's too tough for ordinary Cossacks and they're bad enough."

"All I ask—" Flynn's old plaint was cut short as a sleigh dashed down the street. "Somebody's in a hell of a hurry."

"It's Menchekov and Oguchi!" Jennings exclaimed.

The sleigh drew up in front of the American barracks and the huge Cossack and diminutive Japanese descended hurriedly and pushed into the building. Jennings and Flynn, saluting, stood aside to let them pass.

"Now what's up?" the Irishman wondered.

"The skipper'll let us know if it's any of our business," the sergeant reproved his impatient companion.



THE men were drifting out with arms and equipment for drill when Mansfield's voice sounded, calling for Jennings. The old non-com hurried in.

Hardly a minute passed before Jennings sounded a blast upon his shrill whistle.

"Full field equipment!" the old non-com roared. "Fall in and make it snappy!"

Flynn rushed into the squadroom.

"What's the idear?" he asked. "Anything doing?"

"We're marching some place!" the sergeant hesitated in the flurry of directing various details. "With the Japs and Cossacks. Get those guys of yours mounted up."

Flynn let out an exultant yell and ran to the improvised stables where his men were already throwing saddles upon their shivering mounts. Quickly as they worked, the entire company had formed in front of the barracks before the animals were led out. Mansfield and Batty

came out of the building, bundled in their sheepskins and carrying light packs on their backs.

"Attention!" Jennings snapped crisply. He about-faced and saluted the company commander. "Sir, the company's formed."

"Men," Mansfield addressed his small command after the first sergeant had retired to the file closers. "At last we are to march against the Red Joker's Bolsheviks. He has attacked a patrol of Cossacks and Japanese near the village of Churkin about ten *vershs* away. His men were beaten back and retired in that village where the peasants aided them by keeping the Cossacks and Japanese out.

"We march with the Japanese and Cossacks to take that village and to pursue the Red Joker until we capture him and destroy his marauders. Flynn, follow with your mounted detachment. Squads right, march!"

The American stepped out briskly through the snowy streets to the outskirts of Nickholsk where lines of Cossacks stood to horse, slapping their arms and stamping their feet to keep warm. Nearby, the shorter Japanese, bundled in drab coats, waited in column of squads. A detachment of these moved forward creating a gap in their column into which Mansfield marched his company.

Major Oguchi, perched upon a Mongolian pony like a brown monkey, rode up and conversed with the American commander. Flynn's jubilation was dampened by Menchekov who dashed up with several of his officers.

The Cossack ataman jerked his horse back on its haunches to observe the American mounted detachment and made some laughing remark that caused his staff to shout with mirth. Flynn's face reddened up to the roots of his sandy hair, but he held himself in check.

Major Oguchi spurred his animal over to the laughing Cossacks. He allowed an unpleasant smirk to wrinkle his saffron face and his slant eyes gleamed with snaky vindictiveness. He spoke shortly to the Cossack.

Menchekov boomed out an order and his Cossack troopers swung up on their horses. With gay blue and gold banners whipping on lances they wheeled their horses into column, broke into a trot and then galloped out of the town.

In spite of Flynn's fury he could not help but gaze at them with grudging envy and admiration. That was the way to go to battle. He dismounted and went up to Captain Mansfield.

"Can't I take my mounted men and look after our flanks and front?" the Irishman asked.

"No. The Cossacks have that mission."

Mansfield started his company to follow the leading element of the Japanese as they moved out.

"But, Captain—" Flynn expostulated.

"Do as you are told!" the officer ordered with unusual severity.

Flynn drew back with his squad. He rode with them sullenly as the column moved over the white landscape. Topping bare hills he could look forward and get glimpses of Cossack patrols spread out to the front and flanks. They seemed to be on the job.

It was when they entered a wooded area that Flynn became nervous again. The dense forests of Siberia are particularly gloomy and mysterious in winter and the Irishman felt the same foreboding that he had experienced when on the Mexican border he had come into close proximity to greaser outlaws.

"Loosen up your gats, fellers," Flynn growled and unfastened his pistol holster. "This don't look so good to me. Bolshes could sneak in around our cavalry and have a swell target. Hogan, you and the left file watch that side. I'll take the right. If anything happens, follow me."

Jennings looked around with stern disapproval as the horsemen drew to each side of the trail. He was about to order them back in place when there was a sharp crackle of firearms and a soft drumming and galloping of horses in the snow.

A body of mounted men with fluttering red capes dashed from the shelter of

the dense woods, discharged pistols into the close column of Americans and swerved back into the forests. Some of the plodding soldiers fell with cries of pain while the others milled about confusedly.

It had taken but a few seconds for the attack but Flynn caught sight of a red-bearded, masked rider in their midst. The Irishman jerked his pistol free but his horse plunged, ruining the shot sent after the fleeing assailants.

"The Red Joker!" Flynn yelled and dashed after them. His shaggy mount plunged through the drifted snow into the forest, followed by the American horsemen. The Irishman's wild yell floated back to the milling infantrymen. "Keep after 'em, fellers! Ride like hell!"

CHAPTER V

THE CAPTURE OF CHURKIN

THE surprise had been so complete that the American company had been unable to form to meet the attack. Now that the fleeting enemy had disappeared they were formed roughly in skirmish line on the side of the road. Several of their number lay upon the white trodden snow. There were angry mutterings when Major Oguchi came cantering back with several officers.

It was Mansfield who voiced the furious opinion of his men.

"I thought that we were to have protection on our flanks!" the American blazed. "You ordered me to keep my men in column."

"It is unfortunate," Major Oguchi sneered. "But the Bolsheviks wanted to try your mettle. Did they find you afraid?"

"No! But due to your orders they found us unprepared," the American stormed. "Hereafter, I'll care for my own security regardless of your ideas. The Allied commanders will hear of this!"

"And I shall ask for your relief," the Japanese snarled. "Form up your men to push on—unless you have had enough.

The village of Churkin is less than a *verst* from here."

"Ask for it and be damned!" Captain Mansfield returned with heat. "We'll go on till we grab the Red Joker but my men won't be made the goats of inefficiency. Jennings!" he called and when the old non-com came up issued sharp orders. "Have two squads from the third platoon detailed as flank guards; one on the right and one on the left. They can march as easily in the forest as we can on this damned, rutted road."

Flynn's detachment did not return but the column moved on without them. Mansfield knew that it would be folly to send dismounted men to pursue the riders. Somehow or other he had confidence in the Irishman who had warned him of the danger to his flanks and had certainly minimized their losses by his quick action.

The column had gone but a short distance when shots began to be heard from the front. The forest gave way to a rolling, white plain at the edge of which the Americans halted by the side of some of the Japanese troops. Mansfield went forward to where Major Oguchi and some of his officers with several Cossacks gazed over the lower ground.

Some eight hundred yards away a village of log dwellings made an irregular blotch on the white ground. At the four corners stood block houses not unlike those of early American days on the frontier. From these and some of the houses flashed the guns of defenders, returning the fire of Japanese skirmishers and some dismounted Cossacks. The horsemen were out of sight.

"The Red Joker and about ten of his men went into the village," the Japanese officer told Mansfield. "They shall pay dearly for harboring him."

"Did they see my mounted detachment?" the American asked.

The Japanese shook his head with a grimace of false concern.

"They are perhaps dead," he answered. Then briskly he issued his orders for the attack. "You see that ra-

vine running from the forest to the village? That will be the boundary between my men and the Americans. The Cossacks have surrounded the village so no one can escape. When you are in position signal me from your starting point with the bugle. We shall attack together. Do you understand?"

"I'll be in position within half an hour," Mansfield replied.

The American officer joined his men and informed them of the situation. They moved under cover of the forest to their starting line and after all were familiar with the objective and plan of maneuver Mansfield had the bugler sound attention.

From the right the Japanese fire burst forth with increased volume and rushes of small elements began to occur as they sought to close with the peasant fighters. The Americans also pushed forward, two platoons in assault and one in support.

Hardly had they closed to three hundred yards upon the village when the defenders ceased firing at the Americans although Japanese were still engaged heavily. A small white flag appeared from one of the houses nearest the American force. Mansfield's shouted command silenced his riflemen's fire.

Almost immediately a Russian peasant came out and ran toward them with the white flag fluttering above his head.

"Let him through!" Mansfield shouted. "But look out for some ruse. Jennings, keep your reserve platoon handy."

The bugler and runners with the company commander were also instructed to watch all sides for dangerous activity. Through the interval formed by the two assault platoons, a chubby, whiskered Russian clad in scraggly goat skins plowed frantically toward the waiting officer. The white vapor of his panting breath steamed a frosty coating upon his high collar.

"Amerikanski Commandant?" the pudgy peasant gasped as Mansfield stepped forward to meet him.

"Da," the American answered. "You speak English? What do you want?"

"Talk little," the Russian panted. "Sell furs Chicago, St. Louis. We not know that Americans come to fight us. We surrender if you save us from Cossacks. Will do?"

"You want us to guarantee immunity from the Japanese and Cossacks?" the American asked. The peasant nodded vigorously. "I'll grant immunity to all except the Red Joker and his men. Give them up to us and the rest will suffer no harm."

"We not know the Red Joker!" the rotund little Russian expostulated. "No one knows him."

"Bah!" Mansfield retorted. "He was seen entering your village. Why, then, do you fight against us?"

"*Gospodin!*" the Russian pleaded. "I speak *pravda*—truth! The Cossacks come today firing into our village. We fight back. Then come the Japanese. They will burn our houses and kill all. Save us!"

Mansfield felt for a moment as though the man was telling the truth and that there might be some mistake—and then he remembered the attack upon his company but a little time before. He looked around. The Japanese attackers had been halted for the time being. This must be a ruse to hold off the Americans until the villagers could beat off the allies.

"Unconditional surrender now is all I can offer you," Mansfield growled. "Accept at once or I'll give you five minutes to get back before I start the attack again."

"*Nyet, nyet!*" The little Russian's eyes held a stricken look. "If we die, we die fighting. The blood of—"

There were yells from the rear. Answering ones that Mansfield recognized as Flynn's came on the cold air and the plumping drone of galloping horses in the snow preceded the American mounted detachment's appearance over the hill crest that hid the support platoon. The Irishman leaped from his steaming horse.

"Captain, the Red Joker's got away!" he exclaimed shamefacedly. "Their

horses just naturally ran away from ours."

"He's in the village," Mansfield jerked out impatiently. "The attack—"

"No, he ain't!" Flynn interrupted. "I trailed his gang and caught sight of them on the other side of Churkin. This tracking business is old stuff for me. I followed, and his trail—the Red Joker and his gang—led in a circle and joined the beaten snow of our own outfit back in the woods."

"You're sure of that?" the officer demanded.

Flynn swore vehemently that it was so.

"And it wouldn't surprise me none if he's with the Cossacks now," the Irishman added.

"I wonder," Mansfield looked thoughtfully at his Irish sergeant and then at the peasant who stood waiting anxiously.



THE Cossacks and Japanese had reported that they had seen the Red Joker enter the village. Flynn, who was a product of the western ranges and was versed in trailing rustlers, had not only seen the dreaded raider but trailed him to where he had apparently joined their own allies. Then the Red Joker was not in the village and the Cossacks had lied. No good would come of destroying the village and something might be learned from the inhabitants if they surrendered.

"Tell your people that I shall protect them unless ample proof is furnished that they are allies of the Red Joker," the American officer suddenly decided and turned to the chubby peasant. "Have them cease firing and gather in that blockhouse, there. They will give up their arms and my men will see that no harm comes to them unless their guilt is clearly established. We march in in five minutes!"

"*Gospodin! Ochen blagodar!*" the little peasant would have embraced the American in his exuberant thankfulness but Mansfield thrust him aside.

"Get going!" he snapped. He turned to one of his runners as the peasant scurried back to the village with his fluttering rag. "Go to Major Oguchi and tell him that I have accepted the surrender of the village. I have promised immunity to all unless convicted by proper court-martial of which I shall be a member. Got that? Go!"

Mansfield had hardly gotten the information to his platoon commanders when a white flag waved from the village and all firing ceased. The Americans rushed forward but in good order in case some deadly ruse was planned by the peasants. They found most of the inhabitants grouped in the nearest blockhouse and the arms were piled high on the ground floor. Mansfield posted a guard over these as well as around the building.

With a wild, piercing yell the Cossack riders tore into the village, lances slung but with sabers flashing in the wintry sunlight. A few belated inhabitants hurrying to the rendezvous tried to dodge into buildings but were cut down or pistoled by the howling horde.

The Japanese soldiers were also pouring into the streets and breaking into houses, their high-pitched, cat-like yowls mingling in the bedlam created by the wild riders. Mansfield fumed at the havoc wrought by his allies and his own helplessness at the moment.

"The dirty so and sos!" Flynn growled. His detachment was dismounted and stood with the rest of the Americans guarding the blockhouse where most of the villagers were gathered.

It was not long before the Cossacks as well as the Japanese were trying to obtain entrance into the blockhouse to continue their orgy of killing. The bayonets of the Americans sturdily barred their path and a conflict seemed imminent when another group of horsemen forced its way up to the hedge of steel. Ataman Menchekov and Major Oguchi with some of their officers found themselves held up by the bristling hedge of bayonets.

"What is the meaning of this?" the Japanese shrieked to Captain Mansfield. "I am in command—"

"This village has surrendered to me and I have promised to protect it unless we can prove they are in league with the Red Joker," the American protested angrily. "But thanks to your troops I have been unable to keep my word. Why do your men massacre helpless peasants after they have surrendered? There shall be no more killed until properly sentenced by court-martial!"

"We outnumber you four to one!" the Japanese raged shrilly. "I shall enforce my authority. Withdraw your men or take the consequences."

This was too much for Flynn's fiery nature.

"We don't care if you have ten times as many," the Irishman yelled back. "Bring on your monkeys. We'll—"

"Silence, Flynn!" Mansfield ordered. "Major Oguchi, I want you and Ataman Menchekov to come with me and interview our prisoners. I have information that may change your mind about how guilty these peasants are. Afterwards—you may use your own judgment."

For a moment the Oriental hesitated, glowering with open hostility at the impertinent young American officer. At last he nodded acquiescence.

"We will come and listen," he grugged and jabbered to the tall hawk-like ataman beside him who signified sullen agreement.

At Mansfield's command the soldiers allowed the two foreign officers to enter. Flynn swaggered after them.

THE huddled garrison of prisoners within shrank back with audible expressions of fear as the Japanese and Cossack officers were recognized. Some made sudden movements toward the piled rifles and sabers but were warned back by the bayonets of the American guard.

"Hah! Ivan Ivanov!" the ataman clicked his heels together and bowed mockingly to the plump peasant who had carried the flag of truce.

Menchekov then hooked his thumbs in his pistol-filled belt and surveyed the cowering prisoners with a sardonic, evil grimace on his fierce face. His glance was like that of a butcher looking over a fattened herd corralled for slaughter.

"*Gospodin!*" the chubby peasant, called Ivanov, approached Mansfield. "Your promise?"

"We have come to investigate and my promise stands," Mansfield returned, speaking for the benefit of his allies as well as the peasant. From somewhere a hairy faced villager produced a platter upon which was a loaf of black bread and a tiny pile of coarse salt.

Ivan took it from him and offered it to Mansfield.

"We eat bread and salt in peace. You eat, *Gospodin?*" the peasant spoke simply.

"Peace for those who are innocent," the American qualified and, when Ivanov agreed, tore off a small fragment of the loaf, sprinkling it with salt, and ate it.

There was a murmur of approval from the prisoners as the American performed the ancient rite which signified peace and justice between individuals and communities. It was hushed expectantly, however, when the platter was presented to Ataman Menchekov. Flynn watched the proceedings narrowly.

The tall Cossack drew himself up to his full height and scowled fiercely at the fat little peasant, then with a sweep of his hand Menchekov sent the platter and its contents crashing to the dirt floor. Major Oguchi disdainfully kicked away the loaf which fell at his feet.

"This is foolishness," the Japanese snarled. "Unless they deliver the Red Joker and his men to us they shall all be executed as Bolsheviks, traitors to their country and our enemies."

"Before we go any further," Mansfield interjected quietly. "I want to tell you that the Red Joker is not in the village. At least—"

"It is a lie!" Major Oguchi spat out.

"Who's a liar?" Flynn thrust himself forward aggressively.

CHAPTER VI

CAPTAIN MANSFIELD DISAPPEARS

"Back, Flynn, and stay out of this," Mansfield ordered. He addressed the Japanese officer. "The Red Joker did not enter the village—unless he came in with the Cossacks or your troops."

The American officer went on to explain how Flynn had seen the Red Joker and his men swerve away from the village and how the soldier had tracked them back to either the Japanese or Cossack force.

Major Oguchi shot Flynn a malevolent glance and jabbered to Menchekov who burst out in an impassioned cursing also directed at the Irishman. Flynn edged closer in a stiff-legged way like a dog about to attack an enemy.

Mansfield's hand stopped the impulsive Irishman.

"Get back of me, Flynn," he ordered quietly.

"Captain!" the Irishman broke out. "Those guys are cussing me and I'll knock 'em for a row—"

"Silence, or I'll send you outside!"

Flynn flushed an angry red and held his ground doggedly.

"Tell these guys to go on back to Nickholsk and leave us alone to find the Red Joker. If they—"

"That'll be all from you, Flynn! Go outside!"

For a moment it seemed as if the soldier intended to continue the argument but with a shrug and a disgusted swagger he plunged across the earthen floor to the door outside.

There must have been a stormy interview within the blockhouse because loud voices at times were heard even through the thick walls and sealed windows. At last Mansfield came out, followed by the Cossack and Major Oguchi, both of whom scowled at Flynn as they passed.

The Japanese officer's shrill commands gathered the Oriental soldiers quickly into formation and on the march out of the village. Menchekov's mounted troops followed sullenly.



"MAJOR OGUCHI at last agreed to withdraw all troops and leave us a free hand," Mansfield told Batty, Jennings and Flynn. "Menchekov and Oguchi had it hot and heavy. I think the Jap wanted to clean us out but Menchekov had a different idea, even laughed a bit when he proposed something."

"Did the peasants give you any idear about the Red Joker?" Flynn asked. His freckled face fairly beamed with delight at the news that they were to be unhampered in tracking down the enemy.

"Not a thing but I believe they were afraid to say anything in front of the Cossacks and Japs. That fellow, Ivanov, who, by the way, both Oguchi and Menchekov claim is Petrovski's lieutenant, looked like he had something on his mind. We'll—"

A soldier came to the door of the blockhouse and called out.

"Captain, this fat little guy in here wants to talk to you."

"Just a minute," Mansfield returned. "Jennings, see about billeting the men in the shacks. Lieutenant Batty, you're in charge of the guard and outpost. If you can behave yourself, Flynn, you can come with me."

Inside the rude fortress Ivanov bustled forward anxiously.

"The ataman's Cossacks and Japanese gone?" he queried. Mansfield nodded. "Be careful, they come back. They kill everybody, burn everything where they come."

"This will be different," the American returned easily. "You wanted to tell me something? About the Red Joker?"

"Da, da," the peasant answered. "The Red Joker is a friend of the Cossacks!"

"I knew it!" Flynn burst out.

"Just a minute," Mansfield said. "How do you know?"

"*Gospodin*," Ivanov laid his gnarled hand upon the American's arm in his earnestness. "Many things make us sure but we can give no—no proof. This soldier knows from what he saw, *pravda*?"

"Never mind that. Tell me what makes you think so."

The forehead of the whiskered peasant corrugated as he marshaled his evidence. He began explaining slowly and carefully picking out the English words.

"First, *Gospodin*, the Siberian peasant does not like the Bolshevik. The Reds want to divide all property. But shall we who think much and work hard have no more than a lazy vodka-drunk *muzhik*? *Nyet!*"

"But neither do we want to be robbed by Cossacks and the Japanese trader, Oguchi, the brother of the commandant. They take all while the Bolsheviks leave something. So—"

"So you favor the Bolsheviks!" Mansfield charged.

"*Nyet, Gospodin!*" the peasant expostulated. "Listen. We think the Red Joker belongs to the Japs and Cossacks. Why? Because our people do not know him; because we do not know where his men are. They do not come from our villages."

"How could he be friendly with the Cossacks and Japs," the American persisted, "and kill their soldiers?"

"Did you or your men see the dead?"

"No. Why?"

"No one has. *Nechevo ne nada!* When a village refuses to trade through Oguchi, the commandant's brother, the Red Joker appears nearby and the Japanese and Cossacks take that excuse to attack the village. It is burned, all animals and provisions are taken, men butchered and women—my own daughter is—"

The peasant's rough hands clenched and he turned away with a torrent of choking Russian invective. Mansfield nodded understandingly. Such things were common in the bloody civil war in Russia, both European and Asiatic.

"I see there are no women or children in the village," Mansfield remarked. "What did you do with them?"

"We knew what was coming," the little peasant whirled back to the American, his small eyes burning with a fierce light. "They are safe. How did we know? Listen! The trader, Oguchi, who is a bloated image of his Buddha, has the concession for all trade in this district by order of Ataman Menchekov. But he pays little for our hides and furs, or promises and does not pay.

"Petrovski Gregorovitch had the trade before. He paid good money and we were prosperous. Now this village hides its produce and again sells to Petrovski who smuggles it to the markets. We were warned by Menchekov but it is better to die fighting than to starve. Other villages have joined us. We are armed and will fight! But we have no quarrel with the *Amerikanskis*."

Mansfield stood with folded arms, thinking deeply. Flynn also puckered up his freckled face, his fingers drumming on his pistol butt. Everything seemed to point so clearly, according to Ivanov's testimony and what the Irishman had observed, to the fact that whoever the Red Joker might be he had some connection with the Japanese and Cossacks. Further, that his activities were always in favor, although indirectly, of the trader Oguchi.

To Flynn's more single-tracked mind, the one objective stood out plainly—find the Red Joker. He turned to his officer.

"Captain, they ain't no use worrying our minds studying out who this Bolshevik bird is," the Irishman argued. "It's like wondering what's in a letter. Better to open it and find out. And I'll open up this bird's envelope, too! Will your people help us?" he questioned Ivanov.

"Every man of our village, *Gospodin*," Ivanov promised with prompt decisiveness.

"Not so fast, Flynn," Mansfield broke in. "There's one thing to remember. If, as it seems, the Red Joker is in league with our allies, our task is not a simple one. If we do locate the man and come to grips with him, we may find the Cossacks and Japs against us and they out-

number us by at least six to one in addition to the Red Joker's men. And then if we come out of it alive, we had better have absolute proof of our allies' guilt or we'll find ourselves in an American prison. The boys in France think they have a hard time of it. At least they know who their enemies are!"

Mansfield took off his fur hat and ruffled his dark hair in puzzled exasperation.

"Let's find the Red Bird and worry about the rest later," Flynn maintained stubbornly. "If I ever get a hold of him, we'll make him tell us about it all."

"Your soldier is right," Ivanov addressed the officer. "But you must talk with Petrovski Gregorovitch. He will come if you promise him safety."

"Why is he afraid to come if he is not guilty?" the American caught the other up sharply.

"Ataman Menchekov has sworn to have him killed," the peasant replied. "It is said in the villages that ten thousand Romanov rubles will be given to the man who brings him in dead or alive. He must be very careful."

"If he comes voluntarily he can leave when he wishes," the American replied after some thought. "Can he come at once? All right. Flynn, arrange for the stabling of your animals. We won't leave for Nickholsk until we get that marauder or are convinced that the peasants are aiding him."

"Fine, Captain," Flynn exulted and hustled out of the building to look after his small detachment.

IT WAS dark when the detachment's animals were bedded down and fed. Flynn made his way over the trampled snow of the main street of the village toward the blockhouse where the officers had their headquarters. He was nearly there when a rapidly driven sleigh, accompanied by two galloping horsemen, whirled past him. The Irishman stepped aside and then, startled, turned to gaze after it. The next moment he was running to the blockhouse and was about to

burst in when the door opened and Jennings stepped out.

"Wasn't Captain Mansfield in that sleigh?" the Irishman burst out. He pointed down the street where the sleigh was leaving the village.

"Yeah," Jennings answered uneasily. "I don't like this so much. How do we know these peasants ain't Bolsheviks? The C. O. went to some conference with a gray bearded guy, Pe—Petrov—something like that, they called him."

"Petrovski Gregorovitch!" Flynn exclaimed. "Why didn't he take some of us with him? Didn't you and Batty argue against him going alone?"

"Who'm I to argue against an officer—" Jennings started to retort but Flynn had darted away.

The C. O. was out alone with those birds. Was he crazy enough to believe everything? It was still possible that Petrovski was the Red Joker. Gawd, how mixed up things were!

Flynn banged open the door where his detachment was housed.

"My outfit saddle up and follow me!" he yelled to the surprised doughboys lounging around the huge stove. He grabbed his rifle, his pistol already hung from the holster about his waist, and flung out of the building, shouting over his shoulder. "Make it snappy! We're following the C. O."

The trail led into a dark mass of forest. Flynn loosened his forty-five and looked back. Over the snow he could see some of his men leaving the village. His horse plunged into a narrow lane carved through the dense woods. Only the soft muffled hoof beats of his animal disturbed the brooding silence of the dark forest.

After his eyes became accustomed to the gloomy forest aisle he could still make out the grooves of sleigh runners. The snow seemed to give off a dim radiance. Suddenly ahead the snow was blotched with moving figures. A shot rang out and Flynn's fur hat twitched.

The Irishman's yell pierced the icy air as he threw his horse into the forest out

of the lane. Between the intervals of the trees his gun flamed orange streaks. Into that huddle of horsemen he emptied the cylinder and then hugging his mount's back set spurs to the animal's flanks. Shouts, screams and raging commands emanated from the unknown assailants. Bullets ricocheted whiningly off the tree boles.

With his gun reloaded the Irishman jerked up his animal and whirled it about. A rushing shadow loomed up before him. Once more a spurt of flame belched from his gun. The upper part of the shadow fell into the snow and a riderless horse jolted against the American's mount and galloped into the enveloping gloom.

Flynn waited for a moment, motionless. There couldn't have been more than five or six horsemen, according to the Irishman's estimation. His men following would have heard the shots and would be prepared. It was Flynn's desire to find the C. O. He might even now be fighting it out somewhere ahead. There was a crackle of shots from the direction he had come. The others were coming up.

Flynn drew his horse around and, making a slight detour, soon was racing along the forest road. There were a few scattering shots, then silence once more pervaded the forest. Flynn yelled and an answering yell from Hogan came up to him. His men had won through. Now for the C. O.

Suddenly the forest gave way to open, rolling country. Flynn leaned forward scanning the snowy ground which, after the gloom of the forest, seemed almost as plain as day. The snow was much trodden with hoof marks and the sleigh tracks began to sway from side to side. Flynn urged his horse on with a premonition of disaster which was fully realized when he topped the next rise and gazed at the huddle on the snow.

Hastily he flung himself off his horse. There was a sleigh and one dead animal. The others had been cut loose. But what had they done with Mansfield? There were smudgy stains upon the wood of the sleigh and in several places the white

snow showed more irregular, bloody splotches. Then Mansfield had at least put up a scrap!

Leading the horse Flynn circled until he came to the spot where the body of horsemen had left the mute evidence of tragedy. He mounted and noted that the tracks led back to the forest where he had emerged. The group which had waylaid him was responsible for Mansfield's capture or death. Too late Flynn wished he had stayed and fought it out with them.

Before he could reach the forest a body of horsemen broke from its cover and Flynn let his pistol slip back into its holster as he recognized his own men. They slithered to a halt on the haunches of their shaggy mounts as Flynn rode up to them.

"What's it all about, Flynn?" the lanky Hogan shouted.

"They've got Captain Mansfield!" Flynn explained. "Did every one get through all right? Where are they now?"

"They beat it," the soldier replied. "Every one's O. K. But, cripes, who's got the skipper?"

"The Red Joker, of course! Follow me and we'll run 'im down this time or I'm a dirty liar!" Flynn set his horse galloping along the well marked depressions.

The mounted detachment led by the Irishman broke once more from the gloom of the forests and raced faster along the clearly defined trail. Suddenly Flynn reined up and with an exclamation of anger and chagrin dismounted.

"This is where we started the attack on Churkin!" the Irishman straightened up from scanning the trodden snow. "Now their trail is lost unless we can pick it up—"

"There's the village over there and something's going on, Flynn!" Hogan cried excitedly. "Lots of horses and men, see?"

"By gorry, it's the Cossacks!" the Irishman exclaimed. "I can see their lances. Now, what'n hell? I thought they'd gone back to Nickholsk. Hogan, I got an idear that it's the Cossacks that got Captain Mansfield. Take the bunch

and pick up any dead and wounded where we had our scrap in the woods. Bring 'em to Churkin. That's where I'm going now."

Flynn spurred his animal into a plunging gallop towards the village while Hogan backtrailed with the rest of the detachment. In a few moments Flynn was racing into the village among the dismounted Cossacks who laughingly greeted him and American soldiers who yelled to know where he had been. The Irishman replied evasively, tied his steaming mount at the door of the officers' headquarters and entered without ceremony.

CHAPTER VII

HE IS THE RED JOKER!



INSIDE the candle-lighted room Ataman Menchekov and Major Oguchi dominated the small gathering. Lieutenant Batty, an expression of doubt and uncertainty upon his puffy face, stood almost apologetically before them, while a little back of him was old Sergeant Jennings. So intent were they upon the words of the little Japanese officer that they did not notice the newcomer.

Flynn elbowed his way in front of Lieutenant Batty.

"Lieutenant, Captain Mansfield's been captured!"

"How dare you come in without knocking?" Lieutenant Batty puffed indignantly, glad of this opportunity to show his importance. "We are already informed about Captain Mansfield's capture. Ataman Menchekov heard of the plot and came back too late to frustrate it."

Before Flynn could answer or voice his suspicions concerning the guilt of the Cossacks, Oguchi spoke shrilly.

"I still insist, Lieutenant Batty, that you return to Nickhol'sk. The Cossacks will avenge your officer and find him if possible. Will you give the orders?"

"Not on your life!" Flynn broke in angrily. "We're going to stay out here

until we find the captain and catch the Red Joker."

"Flynn, I'm in command now," Lieutenant Batty fumed. "It was your suggestions to Captain Mansfield that caused all this trouble. The peasants have captured Captain Mansfield for the Red Joker."

"Bunk!" was the flat retort of the soldier. "I'll have proof here in a minute that these Cossacks grabbed the captain. Anyhow, the peasants of this village couldn't 'ave got 'im. They're—"

"They're gone."

"Who let 'em go?" Flynn demanded.

"Captain Mansfield gave instructions that they were to be free," Batty answered angrily.

Major Oguchi, who was plainly startled by Flynn's assertion concerning the Cossacks, jabbered to the ataman. The latter rumbled hoarsely. But Flynn was occupied with the peasants' disappearance and his face wrinkled in dismay. Although the Irishman shared Mansfield's belief that the peasants were not guilty of being allied with the Red Joker he would never have let them loose until absolute proof was furnished.

The door swung open and a soldier came in.

"Bring 'em in, Hogan," Flynn called as he recognized his man. "All of 'em."

"They wasn't none, Flynn," the dough-boy answered disgustedly. "Not a wounded man nor a dead one. All gone. What a war!"

"Get the men back to the stables and wait for me there," Flynn ordered after a pause of discouragement. When the soldier had gone the Irishman turned to Lieutenant Batty. "Lieutenant, it may be the peasants got Captain Mansfield and are the Red Joker's birds but I still think the Cossacks done it. I want permission to go out and find him right now."

"Let you—by the way!" Batty fumbled fussily in his blouse pocket, taking out a crumpled yellow slip. "So much has happened that I almost forgot this telegram from General Hayes. Some Cossacks brought it from Nickhol'sk. Do you know that the General orders us to send you back to Vladivostok under guard?"

"Aw, Lieutenant!" Flynn exclaimed, suddenly meek. "Let me go and I'll turn myself in as soon as I've found Captain Mansfield and grabbed the Red Joker."

"Of course not!" Batty returned petulantly. "Ataman Menchekov has agreed to have some of his men take you back tonight. No, I don't want to hear any more. This company will be much better off without you."

Flynn looked around. Menchekov was regarding him with an amused light in his gleaming hawk-eyes and Oguchi also seemed to take malicious pleasure in the soldier's discomfiture. Was this the end of the search?

The Irishman suddenly swung Batty out of the way and leaped to the door. Before the others could move he had flung himself outside and was in the saddle galloping down the street.

"I'm going after Mansfield, fellers!" Flynn yelled as American soldiers ran out into the road.

He threaded his way between the groups of Cossacks who were standing with their horses in the road. From behind came the frantic voice of Lieutenant Batty and the hoarse bellowing of Menchekov but Flynn was clear of the village and heading for the nearby forest.

As the impetuous Irishman booted his jaded mount over the starlit, snowy plain a half formed plan revolved in his mind. He must locate Ivan Ivanov. The road upon which he had found the sleigh might lead to the peasants' present headquarters. Once there events must fashion his future actions. It was a gamble of death by torture against finding Mansfield and the Red Joker. The finding of the latter had become an obsession with Flynn, but greater than that was his anxiety for the officer, one of the few that had ever commanded the respect of the undisciplined Irishman.

SHOTS snapped overhead with vicious cracks. Flynn twisted in his saddle and saw pursuing horsemen emerging from the village. Far in advance of the others was a lone rider coming up with disconcerting rapidity. Not much danger

from the wild firing, Flynn thought, and once in the forest he could double in among the trampled trails to elude the better mounted Cossacks. He spurred his tired animal into the shadowy woods. A burst of firing came from the following Cossacks as the fugitive faded from sight.

At that last burst, Flynn's mount leaped forward with heartening speed but in the next instant it stumbled and floundered to the snowy ground. Flynn went hurtling over its head but scrambled to his feet and ran back to his struggling animal. Its agonized breathing and jerking legs told the story.

Flynn jumped behind a tree at the edge of the lane he had instinctively followed. The soft, muffled hoof beats of the advance pursuer grew louder and then with a shout a rider loomed up in the gloom, bringing his horse rearing to a halt. At that moment a form shot out from the blackness onto the horse behind the startled rider. There was a brief struggle and the Cossack went roaring into the snow.

"See you later, Menchekov!" Flynn shouted as he set his new mount into a run. He had recognized the harsh voice of the ataman.

There was no need for dodging now with the speedy horse of the Cossack leader. Down the black lane he tore with the knowledge that he was free from any pursuit. Yet, there was enough before him to satisfy the most adventurous, the possibility of hellish torture ahead and the certainty of prison when he returned to his own troops.

That night in the flaring light of oil wicks that showed the mud-chinked logs and dirt floor, Ivan Ivanov looked hopelessly at the six bearded peasants confronting him. Despair was written on their faces, while gnarled, work-hardened hands plucked nervously at unkempt beards or at the matted fur of their great-coats.

The door suddenly burst open and another peasant came in with upraised hands. Behind him a wiry, bow-legged soldier in the American-Siberian uniform lurched forward with a gun menacing the group. Flynn's freckled face grimly

surveyed the peasants with hard, steel-blue eyes, narrowed and savage.

"You, Ivanov!" he growled jabbing his gun at the fat little peasant. "Where's Captain Mansfield?"

"*Gospodin!*" Ivanov gasped. "I do not know."

"You lie!" the American rasped. "Where's Petrovski?"

"I do not know—*pravda!*" the peasant shrank back as Flynn pressed his revolver against him.

"Shut that door," the Irishman commanded. "Tell this bunch to get together and hold up their hands. No funny business, either. Now," as they complied meekly, "tell me what's happened. If you lie to me I'll drill you."

The huddled villagers blinked apprehensively at the earnest American, his bow legs were spraddled wide apart as he faced the group, his gun held menacingly at the height of his belt.

"*Gospodin,*" Ivanov quavered. "Petrovski was to bring your commandant here to meet these men who are leaders of their villages. They feared to go to the Americans because they are the allies of the Cossack butcher, Menchekov. Captain Mansfield agreed to come. He was a brave man. We—"

"What do you mean, *was* a brave man?" Flynn demanded, a shiver of fear coursing his spine.

"He must be dead, *Gospodin,*" Ivanov answered fearfully.

"How do you know?" the Irishman shot out. "The truth!"

"*Pravda, Gospodin.* After Petrovski and your commandant left Churkin we feared to stay. The Cossacks and Japanese might come back and the Americans be unable to protect us. Our men scattered to the forests. There were Cossacks hidden."

"Go on," Flynn growled as the peasant hesitated.

"I came with a few here safely but Petrovski and the American officer do not come. Later I found out the truth. Some of my men have seen the fight. Cossacks chase the sleigh but my men cannot help because they are unarmed. They see the

Cossacks carry the bodies away and follow. They locate the dead hidden in the snow."

"The bodies of Captain Mansfield and Petrovski?" Flynn growled fiercely.

Ivanov shook his head. "The *izvostchik* and the two mounted guards. The other two were missing."

"Then Petrovski's the Red Joker!" Flynn charged. "And you know it. Tell me—tell me the truth!"

"Do not shoot, *Gospodin!*" Ivanov pleaded. "Petrovski is not the Red Joker. I swear it before God! I can say no more."

Nor could the Irishman worm any further information from him by threatening questions. He quizzed the others in ungrammatical Russian but received the same fearful negatives.

"You can take me to see the dead ones?" he asked. There might be some new clue there.

"*Da, da, Gospodin.*" They all nodded vehemently, relieved that the American did not immediately take violent action against them.

"Lead the way, then," Flynn commanded. He retained Ivanov with him. "You'll stay with me, Ivanov. If there's any break or funny business you'll be the first to be drilled, see?"

With his gun ready for instant use Flynn followed with Ivanov into the chill, starlit night. No one stirred in the little village of a dozen poor huts and sheds but further out on the snowy plain sharp eyes could pick out dots which were outposts guarding against surprise. Flynn had located these before and managed to get through except for the man whom he took prisoner.

Silently three horses were led out and hitched to a sleigh into which Ivanov and Flynn climbed. Leaving the others, they started away. The Irishman directed his driver to a ravine where the great Cossack horse stood shivering, tied to a sapling.

The animal plunged impatiently as Flynn approached. Evidently it had been

trying to break loose and return to its distant stable because the saddle had slipped sideways. As the Irishman quieted the animal and replaced the saddle properly, something caught his eye—something hanging from under the flap of the saddle bag.

Curiously, Flynn reached out and pulled at the visible fragment and a startled exclamation broke from his lips. It was a cloth article showing darkly red in the dimness. A red cape! Throwing it upon the ground the soldier tore into the saddle bags and emptied everything in them on the snow.

"Ivanov!" Flynn's voice rang out excitedly. "Look here!" He held out two objects before him. "A false red beard—a red mask—and a red cape! Do you know whose horse this is? It's Ataman Menchekov's! He is the Red Joker!"

CHAPTER VIII

INSIDE THE COSSACK PRISON



"**P**RAVDA, *Gospodin!*" the fat, little peasant rolled out of the sleigh and bounded to Flynn's side, fingering the newly found evidence and chattering volubly in Russian. "Now will the Americans believe us and help us?"

"They sure will, Ivanov, if—if—" Flynn began but hesitated as he thought of the difficulty still lying before him.

Menchekov, the murdering Red Joker, had his command of Cossacks. He knew the danger of leaving the soldier free with that evidence and would take all possible precautions to keep Flynn from rejoining his company. The Cossacks would scour the country for him and watch the American barracks.

If Flynn did reach his company, would Batty act quickly enough to save the evidence from the Cossacks and get it to the general? Menchekov would not hesitate to wipe out the entire American command rather than allow his guilt to be established. He could blame the massacre

upon the Red Joker, which would be true but the peasants would bear the blame.

And the Japs? Whose side would they take? Perhaps they knew the identity of the Red Joker and used him as a tool for their own purposes. Certainly, everything that the Red Joker did turned out to be of assistance to the trader Oguchi, brother of the Japanese commander in Nickholsk.

Flynn realized the tremendous responsibility that rested upon his shoulders. He, who was sought after by his own comrades to be tried by court-martial, could by a false step not only seal his own doom and that of Mansfield but of almost two hundred other American soldiers whose death would not be avenged upon the guilty.

"How many armed men can you get together?" the Irishman asked abruptly.

"Nearly five hundred would follow Petrovski," Ivanov answered. "But he is gone and there will be quarreling about a new leader."

"If the Cossacks and Japanese fight the Americans," Flynn went on, "will your men help us under my command?"

"*Da, da, Gospodin!*" the little peasant assented eagerly. "They will have confidence under an American soldier. What is your plan?"

"My plan is this," Flynn explained. "Tonight you can begin to get your force together. Can you hold them some place for several days?"

"*Da,*" Ivanov agreed. "There is no work in winter except hunting. What else?"

"I want five of your best men to go with me tomorrow night. They've got to have lots of guts—sand, well, pretty brave guys, see? I'm sure Menchekov has taken Petrovski and Captain Mansfield to his guardhouse and I'm going to break in there and see if I can't find 'em."

"Impossible," the little peasant objected. "How will you get through the Cossack guards?"

"I'll get through all right," Flynn growled grimly. "And, if I find what I expect, the Americans will be fighting

the Cossacks and maybe the Japs tomorrow night. I want your five men to help me and I want your whole force ready to come in when the fight starts. We'll try to get word to our general in the meantime and then all we've got to do is hold out until he comes up with the necessary soldiers."

"It is madness!" Ivanov again objected.

"Of course it is," Flynn agreed. "That's why it will work. If you ain't willing to come in on it, I'll do it alone. Do you want to spend the rest of your life paying tribute to the Cossacks, letting 'em kill and burn, taking your women? If you have a better idear let's hear it."

At the mention of women, Ivanov spat out a harsh Russian oath and laid a mit-tened hand upon Flynn's arm.

"It shall be as you say," Ivanov agreed. "If the Americans fight the Cossacks and Japanese, we shall aid you."

THE next day the chief of staff of the American Siberian Expedition in Vladivostok hurried into General Hayes' office with a telegram. Outside, the various typists stopped their work to listen. There was a howl of rage that dwindled unexpectedly into a sort of a groan.

"Have you read this?" It was the general's voice curiously vibrant. "My nephew's in the hands of that torturing devil, the Red Joker! My God, man, did you see the dead soldier they sent back from Nickholsk? Horribly mutilated! I never thought I'd hope to know my sister's son was dead—but I do—I pray that he is!"

The soothing tones of the chief of staff followed and there was an indistinguishable mutter of conversation. Then one of the staff assistants was seen carrying a yellow slip into the general's office. For a moment thereafter a heavy silence pervaded the headquarters only to be shattered by the old veteran's hoarse bel-lowing.

"I knew it!" They heard the general raging. "I told you so. Now that devilish Irishman's a deserter. Send out word that

the damned traitor is to be apprehended dead or alive. Tell the judge advocate to add desertion to those charges against him." The voice rose to a crescendo of lurid curses which died only when the veteran's lungs and larynx failed him.

The officers and enlisted men of the headquarters staff were glad when the day was done and they could escape from under the irritable Commanding General. Yet when they were safely in quarters that night the entire staff was sent for and found the general raging as never before. He was waving a telegram slip under the chief of staff's nose and bellowing instructions.

"We've got to work fast now if we don't want to plunge our country into war with Japan!" The general's voice rose harshly. "Get General Oi on the phone. Turn out one of our battalions and have a train ready to take us up to Nickholsk at once. We must get there in the next few hours and that may be too late. I knew that Irishman would play hell the minute he got out of my sight but even I never expected anything like this. Get busy!"

Staff officers hurried in all directions. Phones rang and urgent orders were sent along the wires. Bugles sounded in the American compound and hoarse voices of command began to be heard as the snow became darkened with soldiers. The general stamped hither and thither until he was connected with General Oi, the commander of the Japanese Siberian Expedition, with whom General Hayes talked long and earnestly.

Finally the American commander hung up the receiver and smoothed out the yellow slip on his desk.

AMERICAN PROVISIONAL COMPANY AT NICKHOLSK MUTINIED UNDER FLYNN AND IS ATTACKING COSSACKS STOP JAPANESE MARCHING TO AID COSSACKS AGAINST AMERICAN MUTINEERS STOP REQUEST YOUR PRESENCE WITH MORE TROOPS STOP

(signed) BATTY

Officers scurried up to the general, who was now in a calm but deadly rage, and

reported the progress of affairs with the expedition for Nickholsk. The stocky veteran called for the judge advocate in one of the lulls of activity.

"Add mutiny to those charges of Flynn's," the general ordered in a flat, cold voice. "Make out the order for a new court. I'll make short work of him when we get him!"

That night across the snowy plains near Nickholsk a group of horsemen rode rapidly, yet taking advantage of ravines and clumps of wood to conceal their movements. Single riders covered the front and flanks. In a gully from the edge of which could be seen the glimmering lights of Nickholsk the men dismounted and gathered around a wiry, bow-legged individual, clad as they were, in nondescript, shaggy furs and felt boots.

Flynn gave his orders in ungrammatical but terse Russian. Two men stayed with the animals while the others moved forward upon the town with their American leader.

It had been easier getting the peasants to agree to his plans than he had expected. All through the previous night riders had come and listened to the story, viewed the evidence and pledged their villages. Five men had been selected to accompany Flynn, young, brawny youths, the best of the volunteers. It was not a job for old men nor wise ones who would recognize the many difficulties and stop to weigh chances. Now the Irishman's small command was in the outskirts of Nickholsk, dodging in between buildings whenever mounted bands of Cossacks swept down the street or dismounted squads of Japanese marched along the snowy roads of the Siberian town.

In a few hours much was due to happen. Even if they unmasked the Red Joker, rescued Mansfield and managed to hold the Cossacks and Japs off until reinforced by the Americans, Flynn knew that he would have to pay the price of disobedience and whatever else the outraged officers might think up.

Flynn's thoughts were rudely brushed aside as a door of one of the buildings opened and a Cossack soldier swaggered

out. Before Flynn and his men could take cover behind the log houses the man yelled at them and rushed up to the Irishman.

"Where are you going?" the Cossack snarled and struck Flynn a savage blow in the face.



LIKE a released spring the Irishman sprang at the huge soldier, seizing him by the throat. Accustomed to abusing the peasants with impunity this was the last thing the Cossack had expected. In a moment Flynn, aided by his young companions, had strangled the Cossack into unconsciousness and dragged him back of a house, just in time to avoid being caught in the act by a Cossack patrol which, singing a wild war song, rode down the street.

"Let me have this bird's uniform," Flynn pushed his men away from their prisoner. He ripped off the man's overcoat which he changed for his own and donned the curly-furred *shapka*. "Now, one of you march in front of me as my prisoner and we'll go right to the prison, see? The other two follow as well as you can."

As Flynn and his supposed prisoner went out to the street he glanced back in time to see one of the peasants straighten up and wipe a dagger upon his matted furs. A wave of revulsion swept over the Irishman but he continued on. There was no time now for squeamishness. That was the custom of this country and that, if he were caught, was what would happen to him—or worse.

It was a common sight in the town to see a prisoner marched to the Cossack prison. The peasants avoided them and occasional Cossack and Jap patrols merely hailed them cheerfully. One more poor devil to be made sport of.

Just how he was to make his entry into the prison Flynn did not know. Circumstances would have to guide his actions. In his disguise he could approach the sentry he knew to be in front of the

entrance but his talk would betray him immediately if the guard questioned him at all. Muffled in the fur collar and with his Cossack *shapka* drawn well down over his face he could pass well enough for one of the wild riders in the dark.

"There, *Gospodin!*" The whisper came from the supposed prisoner as, in turning a corner, a long, low building somewhat back from the street came into view. The other buildings seemed to draw away from it, leaving a white expanse of yard in which it lay darkly, with sinister, brooding silence. Back of it at some distance could be seen the larger barracks of the Cossacks.

"Go right up to it," Flynn whispered back.

In the shadow of the low building a dim figure paced up and down. No lights shone from the shuttered windows. Suddenly, muffled, but hair-raising and chilling in its intensity, came a scream of agony or terror from the sinister interior. Flynn felt a shiver of apprehension course up his spine, but he marched his man boldly across the snow toward the alert sentinel.

"Halt!" The shadowy guard rattled his rifle to the ready. "Who are you?"

"A prisoner," Flynn announced gruffly and continued confidently forward.

If he could only reach the man's side so that he could strangle the sentinel before any inopportune Cossacks came along that was all he asked. To his surprise the guard wasted no more time but hammered upon the door with his gun butt, disregarding the newcomers. Flynn had tensed himself for a spring when the door swung open and light streamed over the white ground. Horrible groans and stertorous breathing emanated from within.

A bulky Cossack with a many-lashed knout in his hand loomed in the doorway and grunted a question. The sentinel laughed harshly.

"A pig for the butcher," he jeered and shoved the peasant inside.

Flynn also stepped into the building, his hand nestling in the pocket where his

old forty-five rested. While the huge Russian closed the door and lifted a heavy bar in place the Irishman took in a frightful scene.

A hanging kerosene lamp cast an uncertain light over the interior. Lashed to a large, upright cross in the middle of the floor sagged a bare-backed man, his arms tied to the cross piece, his body a welter of bleeding stripes. Beside the moaning victim stood two grinning Cossacks exchanging laughing comments and amusing themselves with the agony of the unfortunate. At either end of the long, rough-logged interior two cages were barred off by saplings, from which rustling movements were heard and staring eyes peered between the wooden bars. A stench of indescribable filth permeated the unheated building.

When the great Cossack turned from barring the door he looked into the muzzle of Flynn's threatening forty-five, behind which blazed the Irishman's cold, blue eyes. The peasant also dragged his hands from his pockets and flourished a pistol and a dagger.

"Put up your hands," Flynn growled in a low, savage voice, jabbing his revolver at the Russian with the knout. "All of you—quick!" His gun described an arc to take in the others.

The huge Russian started to howl but Flynn thrust his gun into the man's belly.

"Not a sound, *muzhic!*" the Irishman ordered. "I'll kill the first one to make a noise. Get over here, all of you!"

HE BACKED the three Cossacks together against the log wall where they glared fiercely at their captor, their coarse, brutal faces contorted with rage. A bedlam of noise broke from the prisoners in the cages at each end of the room.

"Tell them all to keep quiet," Flynn commanded and his peasant silenced the prisoners with a few curt promises of sudden death and disaster.

Flynn hoped that the noise had not carried outside to awaken the sentinel's

suspicions. In the silence which ensued he questioned the Cossacks in pidgin Russian.

"Where is Captain Mansfield?" the Irishman demanded. "Is he here?"

The Cossacks with upraised hands glared back sullenly.

"Captain Mansfield!" Flynn called. No answer.

"Search the cages and question the prisoners," Flynn ordered his companion. "Make it fast."

The peasant came back to Flynn who was guarding the soldiers.

"He is not here and the prisoners have not seen him," the man informed him. "Shall I kill these butchers?" he asked, advancing close to the snarling Cossacks.

"No," Flynn answered. His level gaze bored into the fierce eyes of the brutal raiders. "Tell me where Captain Mansfield is."

Nothing came from them but a sullen growl.

"Tell me where Petrovski Gregorovitch is!" Flynn shot out suddenly.

Still no answer but the great Cossack with the knout allowed his eyes to flicker toward the flayed man upon the cross. Flynn involuntarily let his head turn and an exclamation escaped his lips. There over the cross arm lolled the gray-bearded face of Petrovski, eyes closed and teeth exposed, an unconscious grimace of agony frozen upon his features.

A slashing blow fell across Flynn's face and neck. Half stunned, he staggered back to be crushed to the bare, wooden floor beneath the weight of one of the Cossacks. A pistol shot rang out deafeningly in that confined space; an uproar of shouts and yells and then more shots and a shriek of pain. Great leathery hands groped about Flynn's neck, tearing away the fur collar to get at the vulnerable windpipe.

With a convulsive movement Flynn released his gun arm and fired point blank into the body covering him. There was a howl of surprise and the Cossack rolled awkwardly from the prone American. Flynn scrambled to his feet.

The peasant was at grips with one of the Cossacks. The other Cossack raised a gleaming Tartar dagger to plunge it into the back of the pinioned peasant. Flynn's gun spurted livid fire. The Cossack dropped his knife and sagged with buckling knees. At the same moment the peasant broke from the other Cossack and Flynn's gun spoke again with deadly accuracy.

A storm of knocking thundered upon the door and the questioning shouts of the sentinel came in muffled tones. Flynn sprang to his feet. The fellow would raise the Cossack garrison. They must work fast.

"Amerikanski!" it was a hissing groan from the cross.

"Petrovski!" Flynn rushed to the tortured man's side. The bearded face lifted painfully and the eyelids fluttered from wild, horror-filled eyes. "Where is Mansfield? Quick!"

A groan came from the bleeding lips. "Menchekov—captured—us. Others—killed. We—"

"Where? Where?" Flynn broke in urgently. The thunderous blows on the door continued and shouts rose louder.

"They—took—him—" The head lolled back and the lids fluttered down. Low, sobbing moans were the only sounds Flynn could extract from the peasant leader.

A shot from the outside cracked dully and the knocking ceased. Flynn turned to the peasant who was mopping the blood from his face where an irregular dagger cut zigzagged across his cheek.

"Grab the keys from this bird's belt and let the prisoners loose," the Irishman ordered. "I'll take care of Petrovski. Get going, feller!"

As the man secured the keys and loosed the chattering, disheveled mob of prisoners, Flynn cut the ropes which held Petrovski to the torture cross and half dragged him to the door. Urgent shouts from several voices came from outside.

"It is our friends!" the peasant exclaimed. "They say the sentinel is killed

but more Cossacks are coming from their barracks."

Flynn lifted the bar and tore open the door. His other two peasants rushed in with drawn pistols. In spite of Flynn's shouts the prisoners poured through the door and scattered over the snow in a frantic race for liberty. A squad of mounted Cossacks galloped by the building in pursuit, yelling and brandishing their broad-bladed sabers. Shrieks and cries of terror and pain rose on the night air when sharp steel flayed about among the fugitives.

"Carry Petrovski," Flynn directed his companions. "Come."

CHAPTER IX

THE AVENGING HORDE



FLYNN led the way out and skirted the building. Peering around he watched his opportunity and dashed to the cover of nearby buildings, followed by the peasants with Petrovski.

The small group halted between two log buildings. Up and down the streets swept bands of the mounted raiders searching for victims. It would be difficult to get away burdened as they were with the tortured man. They could not leave him.

Petrovski was most necessary. He had the actual proof that Captain Mansfield was held by Menchekov. That, with the evidence Flynn had, would more than convince any one of Menchekov's guilt. They had succeeded thus far; they must not be captured now.

The only chance to protect Petrovski, until he recovered and could tell them where Mansfield was held, was to get him to the American barracks. If they could make it unseen, all would be well.

Dashing from house to house as opportunity offered, Flynn led them as fast as possible toward the American barracks. Two men dragged Petrovski along while the others brought up the rear. At last

across an open square was the American compound.

"That's where we go." Flynn pointed to the log barracks. "Follow me and don't let anything stop you."

He shoved the men forward, cursing the ones who were carrying Petrovski for their slowness. Half over the square the chill air was shattered by a many-throated yell and the drumming of horses' hoofs on the packed snow. A band of Cossacks, with waving sabers glinting dully in the winter night, charged upon them.

"Keep going with Petrovski!" Flynn yelled. "The others stick with me."

Petrovski's bearers staggered along faster while Flynn and his two remaining men faced about and blazed away with their guns at the small body of mounted Cossacks. One of the riders reeled and slid from the saddle but the others, with a wilder yell of rage, spurred on. Flynn held his fire after the first volley until the last moment. There were three riders left out of the five and as they swept down upon the small group with quavering, blood-curdling cries, Flynn's revolver flamed with staccato barks.

Two of the Cossacks flung up their arms and fell from their racing mounts. The Irishman dove headlong into the snow to evade the vicious slash of the remaining Cossack's saber. Flynn was up again almost immediately to meet him but the Cossack continued on his mad gallop, yelling at the top of his lungs.

"Halt! Who goes there?" the sharp, American challenge came from the log barracks and a sheepskin-coated soldier advanced with rifle at the ready.

"Hogan!" Flynn yelled. "Get going, fellers. Here comes another gang of Cossacks. Don't fire, Hogan. It's Flynn."

"By cripes, Flynn, ain't you in wrong enough without staging no war on the Cossacks?" Hogan croaked. "Who're these guys?"

"Let 'em in, Hogan," Flynn flung open the door of the barracks and shoved the

peasants inside. "Hold off any Cossacks or Japs. Just as I said, the Cossacks have Captain Mansfield and Menchekov's the Red Joker! I got proof, Hogan. Hold 'em off."

Soldiers poured out of the barracks with fixed bayonets to answer the sentinel's call. There were hurried questions, a shot or two at a horde of mounted raiders swarming down the street who sought shelter for the time being.

Flynn, dodging the milling doughboys, made for the orderly room where he met Jennings rushing out, buckling his pistol holster about his waist.

"What! You here, guy?" was the sergeant's startled growl. "Have you started another scrap? You're booked as a deserter and—"

"To hell with that!" Flynn retorted. "I got proof that Menchekov's the Red Joker and he's got Captain Mansfield, savvy? See this bird?" He pointed to Petrovski who was held up by two of his peasants. "That's the bird that was with Mansfield and I found him in the Cossack prison. He says the Cossacks have Mansfield. They're attacking us now. Where's Batty?"

"With Major Oguchi on some celebration," Jennings replied, nervously. "Are you sure about Menchekov's being the Red Joker?"

"Listen." Flynn hurriedly told him of finding the red beard, cape and mask on Menchekov's horse and the raid upon the Cossack prison as well as Petrovski's information. "The Cossacks'll wipe us out to keep this from being known. They'll blame the massacre on the Red Joker and the peasants, see? Don't stand there. Get all the men out and hold the place."

The voice of authority seemed to stir the old non-com. He ran into the squad room and his crisp commands rose above the confused sounds within the barracks. Soldiers ran here and there, taking up positions by the doors and windows.

There had been no shooting since Hogan's first few warning shots had sent

the Cossacks to temporary shelter. It was a prickly sort of a lull disturbed by shuffling footsteps, murmurs of the soldiers, and the low-voiced orders of the non-commissioned officers.

Flynn had Petrovski helped into the candle-lighted orderly room and placed in a chair. The jolting through the cold, fresh air had revived him somewhat and he began muttering incoherently.

"I think we'll get something out of him soon," Flynn looked up at Jennings.

Their efforts were rewarded when Petrovski opened his eyes and began to talk painfully and slowly. He told of being captured with Mansfield and being taken to the Cossack prison. From that time he had been flogged with the terrible, metal-tipped knout until he lost consciousness.

The mutilated peasant was again fast losing his vitality. His eyes rolled in his head and blood came frothing to his cut lips and overflowed on the gray beard.

"They t o o k—t h e—American—to—Oguchi—"

"Which one?" Flynn tried to revive the Russian's failing consciousness by shaking him. "The trader or the officer?"

"I—do not—know—" The peasant in his blood-soaked garments slumped in a moaning heap, his face set again in that ghastly grimace of pain.

"Damnation!" Flynn swore. "They'll kill Mansfield before we can find him. D'you believe me now? You'll hold 'em off?"

"You're damn right!" old Jennings growled, "but when Lieutenant Batty comes back he might think different."

"You mean you would turn Petrovski over to the Cossacks if Batty said so?" Flynn demanded angrily. "He's our only witness that Menchekov captured Mansfield!"

"Batty's in command and it's my job to obey orders."

"Oh, my Gawd!" Flynn burst out. "Orders, orders, orders!"

"Here, where—"

But Flynn had unceremoniously

rushed from the orderly room. Springing over the intervening bunks, he reached the rear door where several soldiers were gathered on the alert. At the windows nearby others stood ready to fire should a target appear.

"Let me out, fellers," Flynn ordered. "I'm going on a scouting trip."

THE door was opened, and after a quick look Flynn slipped into the night among the outhouses. He paused to reload his nearly empty revolver and took stock of the situation. For a moment Flynn hesitated. Should he take a chance and investigate the house of trader Oguchi? If Mansfield was there he might be rescued but if he was in the same condition as Petrovski the Irishman could not hope to get away with him unaided. Also it was important to get General Hayes in this as soon as possible.

A burst of firing from the front of the barracks decided Flynn. The Americans were cooped up, outnumbered, and if the Japs joined the Cossacks there was no time to be lost. Flynn darted across an open space and was lost to view among the huddle of log buildings.

That night the town of Nickholsk rang with Cossack yells and American cheers which rose above the crackling bursts of rifle fire, the splutter of automatics and explosions of hand grenades. Again and again the Cossacks swarmed from their shelters, supported by heavy fire from surrounding buildings, and flung themselves at the doors and windows of the American barracks.

Toward morning Jennings hobbled from window to window to replace dead and wounded, distribute ammunition and cheer the tired doughboys. Dogged grins responded to the old-timer's gruff encouragement. They realized their plight but there was no thought of giving up.

"Stand by, guys!" the old non-com roared. "Here they come!"

The next moment rifles flared and spat in the faces of the opponents, bayonets and sabers hacked and thrust through the battered doors and shattered windows.

Shrieks, groans, exultant yells mingled in a horrible medley. With a loud crash one of the doors collapsed, vomiting a horde of Cossacks into the barracks.

Suddenly the snowy plain toward Churkin on the outskirts of Nickholsk was dark with scattered, madly galloping riders. In advance rode Flynn who yelled and stormed for more speed from his peasant followers. They were disorganized, undisciplined, armed in every conceivable fashion but the Irishman felt the hatred they harbored for the Cossacks, and the confidence they seemed to have in the American soldier.

The firing from the town was encouraging. At least the Americans still held out but it seemed suddenly to grow less and less. To Flynn the breathless pace seemed but a snail's crawl and that they would never arrive in time.

He had no plan but to strike with everything he had, to annihilate the Cossacks, and the Japs if there, in one furious charge—an avenging horde—before the peasants had time to change their minds or become cautious.

CHAPTER X

JUSTICE



FLYNN'S wild, cowboy yell rose piercingly as they entered the street leading to the American compound. After him thundered the motley mob of peasants, brandishing lances, sabers, pistols and other miscellaneous weapons, roaring in a fury of revenge.

At the American barracks they came upon the milling throng. The raging peasants plunged their horses into the groups, hewing with bladed weapons or firing into the dense masses. For a while the Cossacks, facing about, held them back but each minute swelled the peasant forces as new riders on lathered horses charged into the fray.

Flynn scarcely felt the jabbing weapons which raked his legs and pierced his side. He emptied his revolver and swung

away to reload. His disemboweled horse reared with a frightful scream. A huge Cossack rushed at him with upraised saber but the Irishman leaped from his falling horse and dodged the slashing blade. His gun butt crashed on the Cossack's head sending the howling swordsman reeling to the ground. Flynn secured the saber and caught a riderless horse and was in the midst of the fight around the barracks.

The peasants, led by Flynn, were fighting furiously and driving the raiders back with growing speed. A Cossack dashed down the street, successfully cutting his way through the disorganized fighters. As he recognized the Cossack, Flynn spurred his horse after him. It was Menchekov!

Several of the peasants followed the Irishman. Turning a corner, Flynn saw the ataman leap from his horse and run into a house—the house of Oguchi, the trader! Flynn also jumped to the ground and cautioned the peasants with him.

"Wait outside until you hear me call," he ordered, and softly tip-toed up the steps to the door.

To his surprise the door was unlocked. He shoved it open. It was dark inside the entrance hall but voices reached his ears and a slit of light marked a door ajar. Was Mansfield here? If he wasn't then Flynn would choke the truth out of Menchekov and make him lead the way to the officer.

Flynn peered through the crack. The huge ataman, furiously gesticulating and waving a fistful of papers, towered above a fat Buddha-like Japanese. The Jap's plump hand slid along the table beside him to a two-handed Japanese sword.

"It is all your fault!" the Japanese rasped in pidgin Russian which Flynn had little difficulty in understanding. "It was your own folly in putting your foolish mark on that American soldier. Because he loved one of your women! Hai!"

"If I am captured these papers will show the truth about you and your brother," the Cossack roared.

"What would you have me do?" Oguchi inquired sullenly. Flynn recognized the fat brother of the Japanese comman-

dant. The hand behind the Jap was gradually nearing the sword.

"Kill the American officer! Make your brother attack the Americans and these accursed peasants!"

"But," the Oriental was plainly playing for time, "General Oi, commanding the Japanese forces, has wired my brother to be neutral in this quarrel. To disobey would mean death. We—"

"Then General Oi and the Americans will see these!" the Cossack shouted. "Yellow monkey of—"

The ataman wheeled as though to enter an adjoining room. With a scream of rage the fat merchant swung the keen blade free from its scabbard and slashed at the great Cossack. Menchekov took the blow on his left shoulder and his own tremendous saber leaped in the light. A swinging overhand blow crashed through the uplifted Japanese weapon and crunched into the merchant's skull like a butcher knife into a green melon.

Menchekov growled out an oath and wiped his blade upon the fallen man. He paid no heed to his slashed arm but made for the inner room. Flynn reached his side like a wildcat just as the Russian raised his saber to cut at a figure upon a cot.

IN THE American barracks of Nicholsk, now lighted by many candles to dispel the early morning gloom, General Hayes gazed about the shambles with a bleak look upon his rugged face. Beside him General Oi waited. The face of the Japanese was mask-like but his slant eyes were keenly alive. Hovering near was Lieutenant Batty, pale and apprehensive. Jennings stood by, grimly savage and bloody-faced. Major Oguchi's narrow eyes flickered before the quiet contemplation of his imperturbable general.

General Hayes fixed baleful eyes upon the sullen, wounded non-com.

"So you let that wild Irishman, damn his soul, get you into a fight with our allies! I don't care what happened or what evidence there was, there was no ex-

case for violence. The case should be laid before me. But for the intelligence and quick action of General Oi it might have meant war between our country and Japan. You and Flynn will pay the maximum price."

"If Petrovski hadn't died—" Jennings protested.

"Don't try to tell me again that ataman Menchekov is the Red Joker!" the general bellowed. "You're in arrest. Wait till I get Flynn and I'll—I'll—"

General Hayes broke off staring at the doorway where a bloody, freckle-faced soldier staggered in, supported by two other soldiers. Flynn's Cossack uniform was torn to tatters. In spite of the bleeding wounds and evident pain the Irishman grinned impudently at the fuming general.

"Har-r-rumph!" bellowed the distraught officer fighting for self control in the face of the grinning Irishman. Then in a deadly quiet voice he addressed Batty. "Put irons on his hands and feet, and sling him in the guardhouse. I'll have him tried tomorrow in Vladivostok and shot the next day if I have to do it myself."

"Just look at these first, General." Flynn drew some papers from his coat. He seemed strangely unconcerned about his coming punishment. "It's in Russian and Japanese but I think it tells the story. Don't let Major Oguchi have 'em!" he cried as the Japanese major sprang forward.

A low quiet command from General Oi sent the major back to his place and the Japanese general scanned the papers handed to him. The quiet was intense. At last General Oi, still inscrutable, lifted his eyes from the papers and addressed Major Oguchi who answered in a hopeless voice. The monotonous voice of the Japanese general droned on for a moment and Oguchi nodded.

It was like a play in which the audience does not understand the speech of the actors. Major Oguchi slowly drew his two handed sword, reversed the blade and plunged it into his own body. The Ameri-

cans cried out at the unexpected act and involuntarily averted their faces. General Oi's countenance showed nothing more than a tired smile. *Hara kiri!*

"General Hayes," General Oi handed back the papers and spoke in melancholy, precise English, "the American company is in the right. One officer of mine has received his punishment. Others will be treated likewise if they are found guilty. I leave you now to investigate and administer your own justice."

"But what is in those papers?" General Hayes gasped.

"They prove that Ataman Menchekov is the Red Joker and that Major Oguchi and his brother aided him for their own benefit. For such traitors it is—death. Good-by!"

"Well," Flynn broke the silence after the Japanese general had caused Major Oguchi's body to be removed and had left. "I guess it don't always pay to obey orders."

"Shut up!" General Hayes barked savagely. "This turned out luckily for us but it might have meant disaster. You'll stand trial for desertion and anything else I can rake up against you—enough to send you to Alcatraz for life!"

"If I show you Captain Mansfield alive will you let me off, General?" Flynn's voice broke weakly.

"Don't—I'd give anything in the world to have him—" The general turned aside.

"Captain Mansfield!" Flynn called.

General Hayes whirled around to see Captain Mansfield standing behind Flynn. The officer looked a bit haggard but smiled amiably at the dumbfounded veteran.

"Remember your promise!" Flynn gasped and staggered.

The general was about to rush forward to greet the officer he thought to be dead but hesitated to growl at his disobedient soldier.

"You win this time but I'll—"

Flynn crumpled on the floor with a tired grin on his blood-stained, freckled face.

STEEL-RIBBED ARMIES

*Armor may protect the soldier of
the next war from enemy bullets.*

TWENTY-FIVE years ago anyone would have laughed at the remark that soldiers would again be encased in armor. But today there are indications that such may be the case.

Before metals were discovered it was customary for soldiers to fight with no protection whatever, although there are some references to wooden shields and rope vests. Bronze was the first metal to be used, about the time of the Trojan war. With the passing of the Heroic Age iron was discovered to be stronger than brass and practically displaced that metal for armor.

The Romans were the first to use steel, covering their body with circular bands on their tunics, although chain armor itself came in much later. Rather strangely, the Romans were overthrown by the barbarian Franks, who fought without any armor. Gradually metals came to be used in central Europe again, until by the time of Charlemagne it was quite common. When William of Normandy set out to conquer England the knights were encased in steel down to their fingertips.

In this period armor reached its height and gradually receded down through the use of chain armor in the time of Richard I. Complete armor continued to be worn throughout the sixteenth century, but in the next hundred years only the helmet and cuirass were used and in an-

other century all wearing of armor had been given up.

Metal uniforms had practically dropped out of existence until the start of the World War. It was very quickly found that the trench helmet could be worn without very much inconvenience and this head-gear rapidly displaced the hat or cap. Toward 1918 many instances were cited of Germans wearing breast-plates of metal.

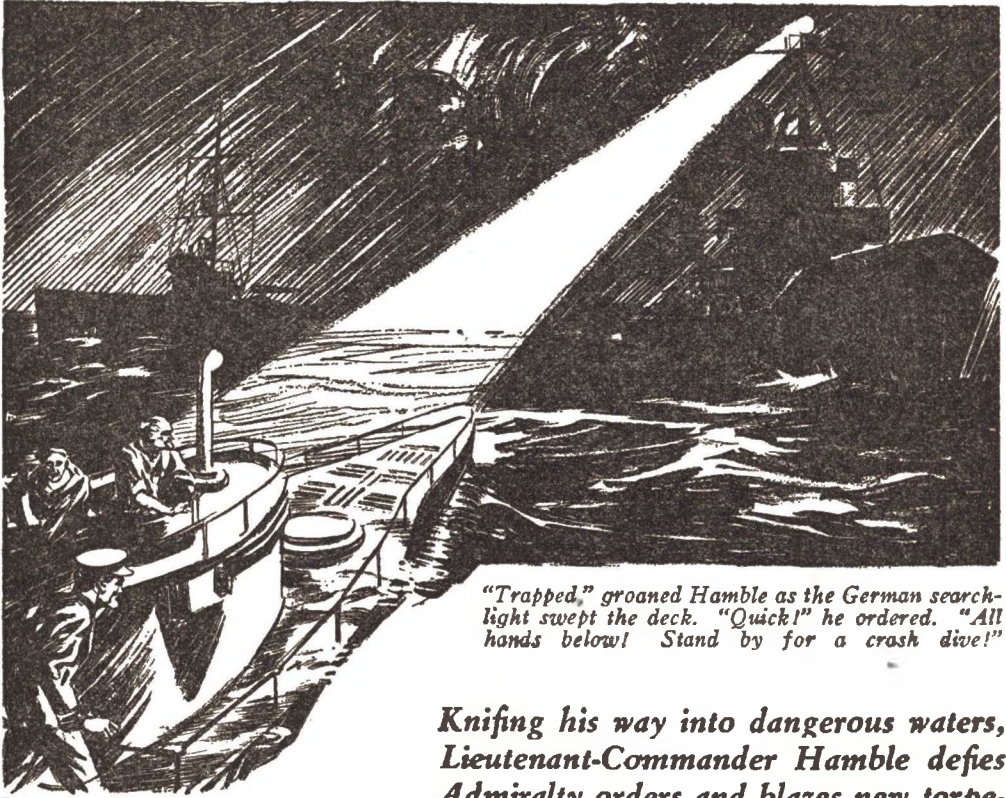
There will certainly be no return to armor weighing a hundred or two hundred pounds. But with the development of light weight metals, which could provide a fairly good protection with the weight of only a few pounds, it would seem foolish to risk valuable lives by handing out only cloth uniforms.

Instances in which bullets have been deflected by objects carried in the pocket, or even buttons, are numerous enough alone to give the subject some consideration. Certainly a bullet-proof vest would have saved the lives of thousands of men struck by a piece of flying shrapnel or an indirect bullet.

Laughable or not, we may see the day when the armies of the world will be shooting at each other without a chance to dent the armor which covers both! Just as the old wooden Monitor and Merrimac were covered with a coat of steel and sent shells against each other for nothing. Funnier things have happened!



The SUICIDE SUB



"Trapped," groaned Hamble as the German searchlight swept the deck. "Quick!" he ordered. "All hands below! Stand by for a crash dive!"

Knifing his way into dangerous waters, Lieutenant-Commander Hamble defies Admiralty orders and blazes new torpedo lanes in the treacherous North Sea.

by Harold Bradley Say

DUSK settled on the North Sea, bringing with it a hazy curtain that thickened rapidly. E-51, on the last leg of its surface patrol, throbbed to the surging Diesels, hanging on by her vents, ready to do a crash dive at any untoward sign.

Lieutenant-Commander Bryce Hamble, R. N. R., an athletic chap with rugged, wind-chapped features, wrapped his muffler more firmly about his neck and proceeded to fill his pipe. Davis, the navigating officer, already had one going. The coxswain puffed at a cigarette, and two engine room flunkeys had stolen up for a brief drag or two.

"I say, Davis, your lighter, please."

The navigator handed over the device. Twice, Hamble whirled the little thumb-wheel without result.

"Your ruddy br...."

Abruptly he stopped. Pipe and lighter were forgotten. He was staring at five faint blobs rising in the darkening haze to the east.

He snatched up his glass.

"Below!" he cried. "Quick!"

He reached for a button inside the rim of the conning tower. Klaxons blared out inside the boat.

"Action stations!" he shouted down the hatch.

The helmsman and Davis shot down the hatch. Hamble followed on their tails.

"German cruisers!" Hamble called down to those in the control room as he shot the lid home and screwed the strongback tight.

A curt command. Vents flew open. Air rushed out of the tanks and water poured in. E-51 slipped beneath the seas. With motors grouped down she slid along.

No internal noises now, save the low musical hum of the electric motors, the rhythmic click of the gyro repeaters, and a subdued stewing in the airlines. Men stood quietly with hands on wheels and switches. No one spoke.

"Coming this way," said Hamble to Davis and the others gathered around him in the control room.

From the starboard came a rumbling, rising note. Rapidly it climbed in volume and intensity.

"Destroyer propellers," Hamble spoke half to himself. Over his face there spread a peculiar, preoccupied look. There was just a perceptible narrowing of his eyes, a tightening around his mouth.

The roar of the propellers swept straight overhead, then receded rapidly.

"Eighteen feet," snapped Hamble to the coxswain beside him. "Not an inch higher!"

"Aye, sir."

Up slid E-51.

"Shall I tell Sparks to get ready to send off his message?" queried Davis quietly.

Hamble did not look up from the eyepiece. "No. But see that Pugh is ready forward. I'm going to torpedo if there's a chance."

Davis regarded him with just a flicker of surprise, then called forward to Pugh in the torpedo compartment.

"All set," Pugh shouted back, striving to hide the excitement that surged within. This was his first go at the real thing.

Hamble set the thin tube edging surfaceward for a hasty glance.

"Steer eighty!" he barked as he brought it down.

A wheel twirled under steady hands. The steering chains rattled. E-51 swung to her helm—swung into position to send forth her charge of destruction and death. Up in the fore compartment stood Pugh and his men, eyes on the great copper faces of the tubes winking and gleaming wickedly under the lights. "When I get off the first one, don't dive unless I command. When I say dive, go to seventy feet and go like the devil."

"Righto," said Davis. "Seventy feet when we dive."

The periscope stole surfaceward. A thousand yards off on the port bow of E-51 a great dark shadow ploughed through the gloom. Four hundred yards behind her loomed another in the gathering haze.

All was deadly still inside E-51. Faces were set and muscles rigid. Eyes were glued to dials and meters. Hands rested tense on valves and switches.

"Steady all!" barked Hamble.

"Port bow—fire!"

A hiss of air forward; a faint quiver through the boat. The torpedo was off at forty knots.

"Steer sixty!" Hamble jerked down the tube as he gave the order.

Suddenly the walls of the submarine trembled to a muffled roar. The first shot had gone home.

Devoid of caution, Hamble shot the periscope to the surface.

"Sta'b'rd bow—fire!"

Another hiss of air, another quiver through E-51.

"Take her down! Lively!"

Coxswains spun their wheels. Under the drive of her screws, the submarine started down. With vents open, water surged into her tanks, and she went with a rush.

Again E-51 reverberated to the crash. An instant later came another muffled rumble.

"Boilers!" ejaculated Pugh.

"Forty... fifty... fifty-five... sixty," chanted an excited coxswain. "Sixty.. seventy, she is, sir."

Air shot into the tanks, driving out the weight that sent the boat bottomward. With a spin of the wheels, she leveled off at seventy feet.

"Got the two of them," Hamble spoke quietly, yet behind his face there glowed a grim, triumphant light. "Sort of squares a debt, Davis."

DAVIS nodded. He understood. A German submarine had sunk the *Creighton Castle*, a merchantman commanded by Hamble's father, and had shelled and machine-gunned the survivors. The elder Hamble had died standing up in his boat cursing the German raiders.

The men of E-51 suppressed the impulse to shout in victory. The enemy's destroyers would be ripping through the water above in a matter of seconds. True, they couldn't see the submarine seventy feet below, but a chance depth charge exploding at the right place was just as deadly as any other. Too, they knew that Hamble would try for surface immediately to get off a wireless.

Even at that moment he and Davis were framing a message.

Blump. Blump.

Faintly those inside E-51 felt the distant jar.

"Dropping them blindly," commented Hamble. "We'll run for ten minutes, then go up."

More scattered explosions reverberated across the water, none of them close. The whirl of propellers rose to port, climbed to a roar, passed overhead and then faded away.

"Take her up," ordered Hamble. "Hold at eighteen till I have a look-see."

"Aye, sir."

At eighteen feet the periscope went up. Hamble gazed through the eyepiece intently.

"Lights flashing," he jerked to those clustered around him in the control room. "Trying to pick up some of the poor beggars, I guess. Well, they won't get their boats shelled. That ought to be one comfort to them."

He pulled down the 'scope.

"Blow one and four."

E-51 lifted from the sea, water boiling along her walls from the drive of the air.

The radio man hooked up his gear and started a message off to Admiralty.

Hamble, Davis and two others were above. The darkness, coupled with the haze, cut from sight the destroyers they knew were milling about in the vicinity where the cruisers had been hit.

Buzzety-buz-zipp-zipp, came the sound of the transmitter from the wireless nook below.

Without warning, a great white light flared out across the water. Nervously it darted back and forth, then swept down on E-51. Its ghostly finger glided past the boat, then pounced back upon the glistening deck and rounded walls. Bathed in its brilliance, the figures on the little conning tower stood out as plainly as actors caught in a spotlight on the stage.

Hamble leaped to the hatch. "For God's sake!" he cried. "Finish it quick!"

The others were diving below.

With a scream, two shells ripped dead over E-51 and splashed down into the sea not a hundred yards astern.

"Down!" yelled Hamble. "Take her down!"

Frantically he screwed home the strongback just as the water surged over the conning tower top. Another salvo of shells ripped down. This time they fell on each side of E-51. The roar pounded against their ears. The submarine trembled in terrifying fashion.

"Thirty...thirty-five...forty." With agonizing slowness the coxswain chanted off the depths.

Another concussion threw the men from their feet. E-51 rolled crazily. Half her lights went out. Depth charges. And those inside the submarine knew that this time the destroyer was not firing blindly.

Another terrifying roar almost as close as the last. Then two more, but further away. A whole series followed but none as near as the first.

"Lost us," spoke Hamble. "Take her to sixty. Set the course for home, Davis."

"Righto."

"Too bad, we haven't a bottle of champagne," smiled the youthful Pugh, endeavoring to hide the exultation he felt glowing in his face.

"I say, Sparks," jerked Hamble. "Did you get all that message off?"

"Aye, sir. By a hair, sir. They were just starting to give me recognition when you dived her."

"Good enough."

He turned to his navigator.

"Hope Admiralty won't have a grouch because I torpedoed first. Knew I could get the radio off afterward in plenty of time with it dark. Different had it been daybreak."

"Righto, but you shaved it close enough to suit me."

"Not much margin at that, eh, Davis? Well, I'm turning in. Call me in two hours. We'll take her surface then."



THREE days later Lieutenant-Commander Bryce Hamble, a trifle pale and with smoldering defiance flickering behind his eyes, sat at the end of a table in a big room. At the other end sat an elderly person of grave impassive face. He was an admiral prominent in His Majesty's circles. On one side of the table sat another admiral some years younger, and opposite him, the commander of the flotilla of which E-51 was a unit.

"But you admit you violated orders?" queried the ranking one in grave, measured voice.

"Technically—yes, sir."

"Please, Hamble, do not hedge. You fired your torpedoes before you sent your wireless, did you not?"

"Correct, sir."

"Assuming that the two cruisers you sank were not alone but were the vanguard of a major body of enemy craft and assuming that enemy destroyers had

kept you down or sunk you after you exposed your whereabouts—you will admit that under such circumstances that the enemy might have approached our own fleet or shores without prompt detection?"

"Possibly, sir, but it was darkening and I knew—I could see that there were no...."

Bruskly the admiral raised his hand for silence.

"Enough, Hamble. You were on patrol. You were depended upon for certain information. You jeopardized the navy when you fired your torpedoes without first sending your message of information that the enemy was coming out. You, Lieutenant-Commander Hamble, are herewith relieved of command. You will report for further orders tomorrow. That is all."

That afternoon Hamble's baggage went ashore from E-51.

Quietly his two subordinate officers bade him good-bye. Silent and seething with inward indignation, members of the crew watched their deposed captain go ashore. To Davis, Pugh, and the men, Hamble was more than just a captain. Eighteen months of living together in a submarine breeds a fraternity whose roots go deep.

For E-51 the months rolled by in the grinding monotony of patrol. There were endless days of beating up and down her allotted ground, dodging an occasional destroyer, diving from Zeppelins and prowling seaplanes, feeling her way through mine fields, sweating down on the bottom of the ocean, banging along on top at night re-charging batteries expended underneath by day—a gruelling, wearisome existence with the only compensation the hope that the German would come out of his den—that E-51 would get a crack at him tearing homeward from a raid or battle.

Week after week, month after month the shipyards of England sent new hulls sliding down the ways to replace the toll taken by German underwater craft and mines. And simultaneously she

launched new fighting craft—cruisers, destroyers, submarines and other types. For these new vessels, she must train new men.

Week after week Lieutenant-Commander Bryce Hamble went about the business of training green crews. Many an officer would have found keen satisfaction in the post and regarded it with a jealous eye. He was operating at a base where he could sleep in a comfortable bed and breathe fresh, clean air instead of the fetid fog of a submarine lying on the bottom of the sea. There was shore food instead of tinned stuff and cold grub—fresh clothes and baths. But E-51 was part of Hamble's life. Not an impersonal thing of steel and machinery that belonged to an impersonal owner, but a living being with a soul that belonged to him and him alone.

In disciplining Hamble, the ranking officers had devised a punishment that served a two-fold purpose. They knew that there were few as capable as he to train new officers and men in the business of running submarines.

THE winter day had opened bright and clear, but the sun that looked down upon the coast of England was devoid of warmth. It was late fall. A light, but biting breeze stirred up white-caps on the gray waters of the harbor. Coat buttoned tight and hands deep in his pockets, Hamble sauntered down the quay where a new underwater boat with crew on toes in anticipation of their first torpedo practice lay alongside the dock.

The boat's navigator, a lieutenant, sub-lieutenant, and helmsman were on the conning tower bridge.

"All ready?" Hamble called across from the deck.

"Yes, sir," sang out the lieutenant eagerly. "Ready to cast off."

From a point further up the harbor an antiquated torpedo boat, the *Grey-finch*, was steaming down the center channel.

Hamble jerked a thumb toward the ancient boat which had the appearance

of being a hybrid between an overgrown motor launch and an under-sized destroyer. Her hull was long and low with whale-back forecastle. Her torpedo tubes had been dismantled for assembly into a better craft. She still had a twelve-pounder forward of her bridge.

"There she comes—the pride of the navy," muttered Hamble with a sarcastic grimace. He turned. Mechanically he called out commands.

"Motors...group down!"

The sub-lieutenant had disappeared down the hatch.

"Motors...grouped down!" echoed a voice up through the conning tower.

The motors of the craft took up their humming.

"Let go—fore and aft!" snapped Hamble to the men at their posts on the superstructure.

"All gone—clear, sir."

"Astern both. Helm amidships."

The steel hull pulsated slightly to the thrust of the propellers. Water boiled and foamed as it rushed forward from the screws. Slowly the boat slid astern and past the end of the dock.

"Ahead sta'b'rd—astern port! Hard-a-port!"

Slowly, then more rapidly, the submarine swung around. Another series of commands and her nose was pointed seaward in the wake of the torpedo boat which was to be her quarry—her target.

The torpedo boat, capable of doing eighteen knots, quickly lengthened the distance between the submarine following in her trail. When the ancient craft was some five miles outside the harbor, Hamble commanded diving stations on the submarine. The helmsman dropped below to carry on his steering. The navigator followed him down. Hamble swept the water with a final glance, then dropped below closing the hatch lid and screwing home the strongback.

"Thirty feet," he commanded. "Blow one and four." Impersonally, he observed the manner in which his subordinates and crew carried out his orders.

With neat precision, they took her

down and leveled her off at thirty feet with the smoothness of veterans. Each was nervously alert to do his best. Each did his job as if the whole responsibility devolved upon him alone.

And each man knew that aboard the torpedo boat were a half dozen officers to observe their work and pass upon their fitness. Just who they were, neither they nor Hamble knew.

Hamble looked at his watch, took a final glance through the periscope, then pulled it down.

For a half hour he ran along submerged and without showing his 'scope. In this practice game, it was the new submarine's mission to get a torpedo—a dummy—home without being detected. It was the *Greyfinch's* mission to avoid being hit by spotting the submarine before it fired which would mean in real attack that the submarine would have to dive for its life to escape shell fire and subsequent depth charges. And the *Greyfinch* had had plenty of practice in the game.

"All right—eighteen feet," directed Hamble.

Coxswains spun their wheels.

The boat edged upwards.

Hamble turned to the lieutenant standing at his side.

"All right, Jackbridge. She's yours. Have a care on your first break."

Jackbridge quickly slipped into his position at the 'scope.

"Eighteen...no higher," he jerked to the coxswain.

"Aye, sir, eighteen." Moments later—"Eighteen it is, sir."

Striving to hide the waves of excitement, of nervousness that surged within, Jackbridge elevated the tube. Tightly he pressed his face against the eye-piece. Down he jerked the gear.

"Two miles off...port side!" he ejaculated. "Lord, I hope he didn't see me."

His face flashed excitement though he tried to mask it.

"So?" said Hamble provokingly calm. "Better get an estimate on his course and speed."

SLOWLY Jackbridge sent the periscope up again. The boat was trimmed with bare negative buoyancy. Even at a very slow speed her planes would hold her up. Jackbridge cut the trim a little more and slowed boat till she was barely moving ahead. He sent the tube up. Choppy, little seas flecked with white helped hide the faint trail left by the tube.

Quickly he called out figures to his navigator. Casually, Hamble watched the navigator do his calculating.

Moments later, he eyed with feigned disinterest Jackbridge's deflection work.

Forward, the sub-lieutenant was superintending operations in the torpedo compartment. The firing tanks were charged. The big dummy projectiles lay ready to leap forth.

Abruptly, Jackbridge sent the 'scope to the surface. "Steer forty!" he snapped.

"Forty, sir."

The steering chains rattled slightly. The submarine started swinging.

"Steady—all. Port bow—fire!"

Jackbridge jerked back from the periscope which he had brought down with a rush.

For a full fifteen minutes they slid along below, then crept up for a look.

An exultant light flashed across Jackbridge's face.

Alongside the *Greyfinch* a mile away, he saw a small boat bobbing in the water as men made hoisting lines fast to the dummy which had caught the ancient torpedo boat right under the bridge.

Two more successful attacks followed. Glumly Hamble watched his charges demonstrate the thoroughness of their training. Like veterans they handled their boat and tubes. True, in their work he found a certain satisfaction, but it meant that here was another crew that would go off to the real thing like a half dozen others he had trained while he would go about the monotonous business of training more. No joy found Hamble in this assimilated business—fir-

ing dummy "fish" at old tubs of his own flag which had outlived their usefulness.

Mechanically, Hamble's eyes followed Jackbridge sending up the 'scope preparatory to another shot, but his mind was far afield.

Suddenly Jackbridge, his lips framed to snap out the command to fire, jerked back from the tube which came down with a rush. The color left his face. His eyes dilated.

Before he could cry out, Hamble jumped to the tube.

He shot the periscope to the surface and even as Jackbridge cried out the alarm, he saw the thing. It was a double tube, arched at the top and painted the color of the sea. Hamble knew the sinister markings. It was a German submarine!

Across the water not fifteen hundred yards away steamed the *Greyfinch*. Hamble saw a signal from its deck—the signal that meant "we see you."

He jerked down his periscope. Simultaneously he saw the German periscope start down.

He knew the *Greyfinch* had spotted the German 'scope—taken it for the English submarine.

Any second now and the torpedo boat, oblivious to its danger, would hurtle skyward in a blinding roar that would tear her bit from bit. There was no time to warn her—no way to save her. For one flashing instant, he stood paralyzed and speechless.

"Full ahead!" Hamble's voice thundered along the bulkheads of the English craft. "Full ahead!"

A moment of panic gripped the coxswain. The altered course would send them crashing head on into the U-boat! He shot a glance at his mates. Grim resolution was written on every face. He steadied. "Aye, sir. Full ahead."

The motors whined upward. With a pulsing throb, the submarine shot forward under the driving thrust of whirling screws.

"Steady, all," bellowed Hamble. "We're ramming!"

THE men tensed at their stations, every fibre braced against the shock of the coming impact. A deathly silence reigned, broken only by the rumbling whine of the racing motors. Suddenly there was a crunching, grinding jolt. Hamble's ship lifted sharply, canting wildly as her knife-like nose bit deeply into the vitals of the German submarine.

In some fashion, the mortally wounded German swung sidewise, locking the other's nose underneath a frame.

"We're sinking!" cried the man at the depth dials. With a terrifying rush she started down.

"Thirty—thirty-five—forty!" called the man at the dials.

"Blow the buoyancy! The auxiliary! One and two!"

Clear and sharp, Hamble's commands rang out.

"Forty-five—fifty—fifty-five—sixty—" With alarming speed the submarine shot bottomward. She was canting downward sharply by the nose. Instinctively men gripped at supports. No crying out—no shouting. Only the calling and echoing of commands and the rush of air through the lines blowing out the water. If Hamble couldn't stop her—if she kept on going—

"Sixty-five—sixty-eight—"

As if some gigantic force had caught her underneath and heaved, the submarine bounded surface-ward. Those within her felt the deck lift against their feet. Her forward tanks had been blown most. Her nose canted crazily.

"Flood one and two!"

With a rush the water roared in, but not fast enough to level her off before she broke surface. Her nose shot from the sea like the head of some giant whale in the process of leaping from the water. The ocean cascaded downward along her walls. Slowly her fore end settled down. Her conning tower raised, dripping from the sea. Her after part lifted up, water streaming down its glistening sides.

Around her a vast black sheath was spreading out and leveling down the white-capped seas to swells of oily

smoothness. A hundred feet distant from the submarine two blobs splashed feebly in the water.

Down on the submarine rushed the torpedo boat. Men with lines tied around their waists dropped down over the sides of the *Greyfinch* to snatch up two half-drowned Germans who in some miraculous manner had escaped from their death trap.

Up through the conning tower hatch of the English submarine rose Hamble.

He waved to a knot of blue-and-braid gathered on the foredeck of the torpedo boat. The *Greyfinch* slid in closer.

"I say," came a voice which Hamble thought had a familiar note about it. "Neat bit of ramming. By the bye—your boat's target work was very good. Report aboard when we dock."



FIVE minutes later the submarine was banging along behind the *Greyfinch* headed for the training base docks.

The torpedo boat moved on up the harbor to its berth. Jackbridge took the submarine alongside of the dock. A proud, exultant crew, not a little excited, made her fast.

Hamble hopped ashore and headed for the *Greyfinch's* berth. The smiling lieutenant who commanded her was waiting at the plank. He stuck out his hand.

"Thanks," said he, "and congratulations. Might have missed dinner tonight save for you. Admiral Megler-Tapper wants to see you in the cabin."

Hamble felt an inward start, but quickly stifled it. Megler-Tapper was the admiral who had taken E-51 from him.

"Very well," he answered impersonally.

Past pairs of admiring eyes all turned

on him, he walked along the little deck to the cabin.

An elderly person, impassive and grave of face rose to meet him. His eyes were unsmiling, impersonal. With a slow, deliberate gaze he regarded the submarine training officer.

Hamble snapped rigidly to attention and saluted.

"I say, Hamble," half growled the other, "You didn't wireless on this one either—eh?"

"No, sir. I thought delay in ramming might inconvenience the admiral."

Slowly, every wrinkle of the admiral's face wreathed into a grin, broad and deep. He jumped to his feet.

"Hamble, I salute you!"

He grasped the other's hand.

"Magnificent work! And by the bye—we're going to undertake some operations in the Marmora. Secret, of course. How would you like to take a flotilla down there? Be sort of on your own with orders to sink anything you can. Appeal to you?"

Hamble struggled unsuccessfully to hide the joy that surged within him.

"Whatever the admiral commands."

"And I have called in E-51 with two others for the mission," he continued. "I am informed you have rather a preference for her."

"That's very fine of the admiral," answered Hamble beaming. "I thank you, sir."

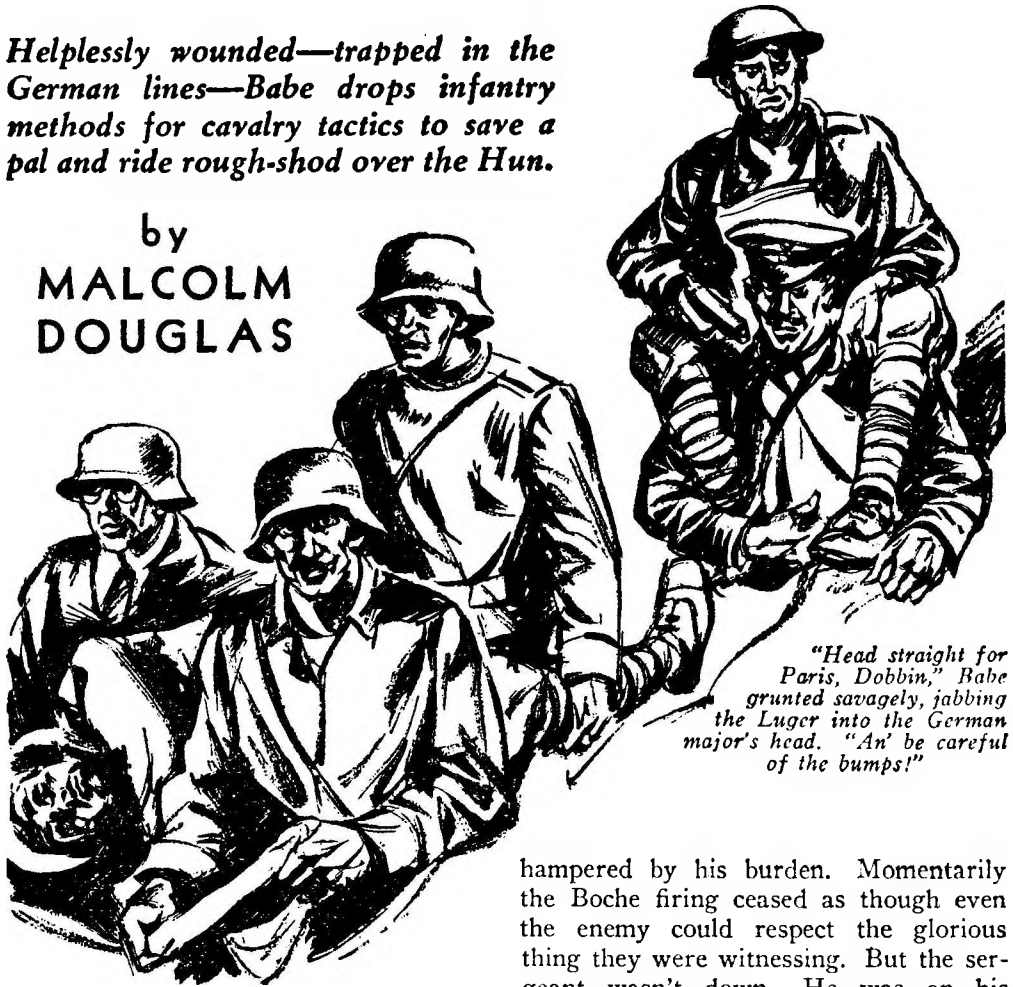
The admiral hastened to cut short his thanks. "You will report to my office in the morning," he said brusquely. "Good day."

With that the admiral strode out of the cabin, and a tongue-tied Bryce Hamble, Lieutenant-Commander, R.N.R., stood alone on a deck that seemed rising toward the clouds.

RIDE 'EM, Doughboy!

Helplessly wounded—trapped in the German lines—Babe drops infantry methods for cavalry tactics to save a pal and ride rough-shod over the Hun.

by
**MALCOLM
DOUGLAS**



"Head straight for Paris, Dobbie," Babe grunted savagely, jabbing the Luger into the German major's head. "An' be careful of the bumps!"

ENEMY Mausers belched lead at him. Tendrils of barbed wire held him back. Mack Burton, D Company sergeant, cursed futilely, tore himself loose, and staggered on with his unconscious burden, the stark knowledge of imminent death chilling his heart.

Suddenly he staggered and slipped in the muck of that desolate strip separating the two jagged lines of trenches. Doughboys who had been peering over the parapet, awaiting the return of their raiders, saw him silhouetted against the crazily massed barbed wire. They groaned as they saw him stumble,

hampered by his burden. Momentarily the Boche firing ceased as though even the enemy could respect the glorious thing they were witnessing. But the sergeant wasn't down. He was on his knees. Slowly he righted himself and lurched ahead.

The Boche resumed fire with renewed vigor. The ghastly glare of a Very light mercilessly revealed the gaunt sergeant and his limp, unconscious comrade. One venomous leaden slug snipped the top band of Sergeant Mack's wrap legging. The spiral unwound and flopped crazily, further impeding his progress. But the very awkwardness of his slow race for life and his dogged staggering toward the Yank trenches favored him. There was one more moment of terrible suspense before he stood poised an instant on the parapet, then slumped down with

his burden into the waiting arms of his comrades.

Frenzied cheers swelled to a roar that carried above the booming of distant artillery. And it seemed that an echo of those cheers came back from across the barbed wire—sporadic, involuntary cheers, that must have been instantly silenced by the German officers.

"Jeepers, but that was wonderful," cried Tub Jenkins as he pillowed the sergeant's head in his lap and expertly held a canteen to his lips. "I hope to spit in your mess-kit, if that wasn't the nerviest doggone stunt ever pulled off on the western front!"

Sergeant Mack stirred convulsively, spat once in a geyser, then realized that it was cognac and not limpid water gurgling past his tonsils, lay quietly and gulped until he heard a groan. Sitting up suddenly he brusquely ordered Tub Jenkins to give his buddy a swig. The corpulent private switched his attention to the lad whom Sergeant Mack had carried in under fire from No-man's land. The fiery fluid flowed down the throat of the unconscious private until the stimulant got in its licks. Then he came up spitting and gazed curiously at Tub.

"How come I'm here, Tub?" he queried.

"You come here ridin' pick-a-back on Sergeant Mack," Tub explained. "You would've made a happy home for trench rats if he hadn't lugged you back, Babe."

Dazedly Babe passed one hand over his aching head. He gazed idly at the jelled scarlet that clung to his fingers. Dimly he recalled the raid, the boys going down, Sergeant Mack clubbing with an automatic, a hulking Heinie with rifle raised high conking down on the sergeant, his own last effort—a flung trench knife that spitted the Heinie's throat, a swift blur, shooting stars, then unconsciousness. Now he was safe but he didn't much care.

"Wish he hadn't," Babe muttered.

"Wish he hadn't what?" demanded the indignant Tub who insisted on worshipping his sergeant. "Yuh wish he

hadn't drug you back here to Michigan Boulevard?"

"That's it, Tub," said Babe. "I'm more damn bother to this outfit than I'm worth."

"Like thunder you are," piped up Tub. "If it wasn't for me to kid at and you to sing for 'em, these bums wouldn't get nowhere. Don't the guys all feel better after you sing to 'em?"

"I dunno," said Babe; "I may be able to warble a bit, but as a fightin' dough-boy I'd make a good jockey."

"What d'yuh mean," growled Sergeant Mack, calmly reaching out for Tub's canteen and draining it to the last drop before he resumed. "Think I didn't see yuh heave your trench knife at that Boche what was clubbing down on me with his Mauser? Yuh saved my life, Babe, and it takes a fightin' man to do that for me."

The private called Babe blushed furiously. None of the squad could notice it under the dirt but it was there just the same. He ducked his head so that his cocked, steel helmet covered his eyes. He didn't want any of the boys to see tears in them. Babe was that way. And what Sergeant Mack had said reached his heart.

"Aw, I just had a bit of luck, Sarge. But what I mean is every time I go out someone has to drag me back. You've done it twice. Old Jenks—Jenks what took that Maxim nest to the cleaners back on Hill No. 414—he dragged me in once and I've only been out on three raids."

"Forget it, Babe," advised the sergeant, "lucky for me you had a 'bit of luck' or I'd be pushin' daisies right now."

Again the kid blushed, but it didn't show.

A STRANGELY assorted pair were Sergeant Mack Stone and Babe Cooper.

Sergeant Mack was as hard as the cobblestones of the alleys in the East Side which had spawned him. Even as he squatted on the fire step of the trench it was evident he was a man of brawn,

one hundred and ninety pounds of raw beef. His flinty eyes peering out from under a battle-scarred helmet which was tilted to half cover a livid scar—from a Moro machete—over his right eye, gave no hint of the affection he felt for Babe.

Private Babe Cooper's mother hadn't raised her boy to be a soldier. She had visioned her boy as a star vaudeville singer and had rubbed out many a dollar on the wash board to have his voice trained. Babe—the boys had dubbed him that since his rookie days since they saw that a wrap legging would wind around his spindly shank way up to the belt—had endeared himself to the gang with his voice. Once he had sung "Home Sweet Home" down in a dugout when the H. E. shells were playing a tattoo up above and every doughboy in the hole had tears in his eyes—every one but Sergeant Mack. The sarge had simply blown his nose hard and gone out to see why a shell hadn't hit 'em yet.

But though the boys craved to be with him a lot Babe felt it was just because they felt sorry for him and liked his voice. He had never wanted to be a singer. He had longed to be a prize fighter! Babe, with his toothpick legs, a prize fighter! He wanted his buddies to like him as a fighter. And it hurt plenty to know that three times, after as many raids, he had had to be carried back. He'd rather not come back at all than have others risk their lives for him.

Sergeant Mack was Babe's idea of a fighting man, a real soldier. For that matter the sergeant was Captain Babbitt's idea of a first class scrapper too, and the captain knew men. It was because he was such a dependable, old, regular army man that Captain Babbitt had sent the sergeant out on a raid to find out something about the strength of enemy opposite the sector he had just taken over from the French. The sergeant found out plenty, and now, thanks to Tub's cognac, he was ready to report.

"Come on, Babe," he said, "we gotta

report to the cap'n. Take a stroll down Boul Mich with me."

Together the husky sergeant and the spindly private made their way along the muddy duckboards which served as pavement for the trench which some of the Chicago boys had dubbed Michigan Boulevard. At a "cross street" they turned and soon slipped under the gunny sacking covering the entrance to the captain's dugout.

They found the officer leaning over a map spread out on a crude board table. He was studying the map under the flickering light of a brace of candles set crookedly in the necks of two vin rouge bottles. The sergeant strode forward and came to attention in front of the table with Babe a pace behind and to one side. The captain looked up suddenly thrusting out his lean, square jaw.

"Who has opened a saloon on Michigan Boulevard, Sergeant?" he demanded, withholding the return salute.

"The sergeant couldn't say, sir," Sergeant Mack answered, "but it's good stuff. The captain has a keen nose."

With a grin Captain Babbitt returned his sergeant's salute and waved his hand toward a board bench. "Sit down, boys. Glad you found some good stuff. You've probably earned it. Now, tell me about it. Sergeant."

"There's Germans in them there trenches, Captain," said the sergeant.

"Surprising!"

"I mean lots of 'em, sir. Maybe there hasn't been much doing for the Frogs in this sector but it's my belief there's an uncommon lot of them Boche over there plottin' trouble for someone."

"Wonder who?"

"Well I only need one guess, Captain Babbitt. Them Boche is flocking in there like flies around a bunghole. We met a few of 'em."

"I judged as much," said the captain soberly. "How many came back?"

"They was ten of us, sir. We got past the wire all right. Then as there seemed to be something doing in the Heinie

trenches we crawled up close. We found out that new troops was being jammed into them trenches. We knew the Frogs hadn't expected that when they evacuated and left us here. We hung around too long. One of the boys slipped. A flare went up. The Boche cut loose with a machine gun and Mausers. Then a patrol came out to mop up. It didn't take long but in the dark they wasn't so good. Babe and me's all that's left."

"How'd Private Cooper get back?" the captain asked.

"He's here, ain't he? He come back with me."

Babe Cooper winced. He knew that the captain must have heard of his inability to come back on his own power after a raid. He didn't like it but he did want his sergeant to get credit where it was due.

"I'll tell you, sir," Babe piped up. "The last I remember a Boche thought my head was a baseball and his Mauser was a bat. When I comes to with Tub's canteen in my mouth..."

"So that's the saloon on the avenue," the captain interrupted. "I'll have to inspect that joint. I haven't had a drink since we came in. Well, go on—what's stopping you?"

"Nothing—I mean, you stopped me, sir. I was saying that when I came to, Tub told me Sergeant Mack here had brought me back like an Indian papoose, on his back. It's the second time he's done that, sir, and so help me sometime I'm going to do something for the sergeant."

The captain smiled. He understood this boy and the sincerity that prompted his statement. As a matter of fact he had witnessed his sergeant's valiant rescue and thrilled to it and the knowledge that such men as these were in his command.

"I have no doubt you will help him some day," the captain said kindly. "But," he added smilingly, "don't try to carry him in on your back, Private Cooper."



IT WAS stuff like that that burned up Babe. He knew the captain meant all right but he hated the idea of always being considered negligible physically. He yearned for the chance that never seemed to come to show his captain and his sergeant and buddies that he could hold his own with the best of them.

Grimly returning to the business at hand Captain Babbitt told his men that their invaluable report jibed with advices from the intelligence department.

"I'm informed that a big push is to be launched against this sector within a week," he said. "One of our aviators came down a few hours ago, dying. He landed just back of the lines and before checking out said he'd seen heavy troop movements miles back in German territory. We're due to attack and beat the Boche to the punch. I haven't much confidence in these Frog reports left to me here. There's scouting to be done. I wish, Sergeant Mack, that you weren't worn out."

"Who in hell—" the sergeant sputtered, "I mean who in the devil said I was worn out."

"I did."

"The captain is mistaken."

"Good!"

"What's the dope?"

"Take a squad immediately. Get through the wire. Look out for traps in the wire lanes and reach the trenches if possible. Send your men back from there. Get through, if you can, and hole up all day tomorrow if necessary. Find out what the lay of the land is. Locate machine gun nests. Come back—if you can, and report tomorrow night. That's the dope."

Sergeant Mack's lips pursed and he emitted a thin, little whistle. One hand went up and tilted back his steel helmet. With a dirty forefinger he studiously scratched the livid mark left by the native molo.

"Anything further, sir?" he inquired quietly.

"Nothing further, Sergeant," said the captain, soberly. "Everything clear?"

"Very—clear," said the sergeant, saluting and doing a snappy about face, with Babe at his heels.

At the dugout entrance Sergeant Mack and Private Babe were halted by the captain.

"One minute, you fire-eaters!" Walking to them the captain extended his hand to the sergeant. "You are a man and I'm proud to have you in my company. I want you to know that, in case—well, in case you have tough luck. I wouldn't send you out if the lives of many didn't depend on the scouting that you, of all men in the company, can accomplish—if it can be accomplished at all."

Then the captain noticed Babe. "You can leave Private Cooper behind for rest."

Private Cooper's back straightened like a ramrod. His cheeks flushed, and planting his banty legs apart, he looked up to gaze squarely into his captain's eyes.

"Captain Babbitt," he snapped, "I'm right well rested. I just had a nice sleep out there. I'm fit, an' Captain, I'm either goin' with Sergeant Mack or I'm goin' over the hill."

"Good boy," said the captain and his voice choked before he could say anything else. He simply placed his hand on Babe's shoulder and pushed him toward the entrance. The captain had a boy of his own in the First Division, a boy no older than Babe. He hoped that his boy would be like Babe when he faced the test. But Babe Cooper didn't know that. All he knew was that perhaps now he would have a chance to balance the books with Sergeant Mack; balance the books or close out the account.

SERGEANT MACK picked his men carefully, selecting the huskiest and toughest of the volunteers who craved a trench raid. He knew his business and soon had his men blackened with grease—faces, necks, and arms smeared so that no patch of white would be visible when they invaded that desolate waste so pregnant with death, lying between the Ger-

man and Yank trenches. Within twenty minutes of his report to the captain, Sergeant Mack, with Babe Cooper at his heels and the others trailing behind, slithered over the top and began his cautious trek into No-man's land.

At first there were slight noises, muffled curses and now and then a whispered word among the raiders; but, as they advanced, they were as silent as the terrain would permit. Tub Jenkins, who had been one of the first to volunteer, stifled a cry when he wallowed head first in a shallow shell hole, filled with muck and slime. But as they drew near to the wire entanglements all were extremely quiet, knowing that the slightest unusual noise would raise the alarm, send rockets skyward lighting the waste, and draw a deadly machine gun fire.

Foot by precious foot, Sergeant Mack forged ahead. Once he came to a lane through the wires and halted. For several suspense-fraught minutes he waited, then his groping fingers, moving the barest fraction of an inch at a time, encountered a cord. He knew that a tug at that cord would set off some ingeniously contrived signal warning the Boche, and that a machine gun trained on the lane would belch fire.

Passing by the lane he crawled roughly parallel to his own trenches until well past the trap. Then with infinite caution he began working his way through a thin place in the barbed wire. Once he waited for Babe to come up and extricate him. One by one the raiders got through, at the cost of lacerated hands and shredded O. D.

Occasionally a Very light soared upward and burst with a bluish glare, casting its ghostly light down on the forbidding strip separating the trenches. When this occurred, the Yank raiders instantly froze in whatever position they were caught, some burying their faces in the caked mud, not daring to move a fraction of an inch, knowing that keen enemy eyes were searching, ever searching, for some movement or indication of just such an attempt as they were making.

It was after such an incident that Tub Jenkins, cramped by the uncomfortable position he had held, moved forward awkwardly after the light had died away. He fell sidewise and his steel helmet clanked sharply against another metal object. His rapidly searching hands located another steel helmet, one with a coal scuttle outline, and passed on to touch a cold and bloated face.

"E-e-e-yah," he exclaimed involuntarily, "I hope to spit in your mess-kit if I didn't—"

He never finished the sentence. The damage was done. The sound of his helmet colliding with the coal scuttle brain protector and his sharp exclamation had aroused the Boche in the trench ahead. Very lights lit the sky. Maxims traversed No-man's land. Mausers were fired by Boche infantrymen at every lump and other object that might possibly be a raiding Yank. Hell broke loose. During the bedlam Babe heard a gasp beside him, and turning his head slightly, saw one of his buddies clawing at his neck. The movement brought enemy lead and suddenly the Yank lay still, mercifully finished, saved from the slower agony of dying by a bullet through the neck. Babe didn't move, and after a few minutes that seemed hours the sector quieted down again. One man was dead—the one Babe had seen go west. Tub Jenkins had paid a lesser price for his lack of control, but he would never walk again. A Mauser slug had traveled for three inches down his spine, laying bare a row of mashed vertebrae.

On the instant that the fire died down and lights gave way to darkness, Sergeant Mack and Babe started leading the rest of the squad to the left and away from the spot. As rapidly as they dared they moved parallel to the enemy trenches. But they couldn't escape. Within five minutes there were other moving shadows in No-man's land. German infantrymen were over the top and out to investigate.

As the Yanks fled, Babe saw shadowy forms groping about where he had so

recently lain. He hoped they wouldn't find Tub who had started back for the wire accompanied by one of his buddies who helped him drag along with helpless limbs.

Babe hoped the Boche would be content with finding the body of his slain comrade, but they weren't.

The Germans, with shrewd insight, moved toward the Yanks who on muttered instructions lay still as death, clutching automatics and trench knives, awaiting the inevitable. It came when Sergeant Mack reared up and sheathed his trench knife in the body of a burly Boche who was crawling cautiously forward on hands and knees. After that it was every man for himself with not a thing in the world barred.

No longer were the Yanks and Germans crawling on their bellies. Now they were on their feet fighting like demons. Knee to knee. Steel to steel. Stabbing, kicking, slugging—automatics spitting dangerously but sparingly. The fighting was at such close quarters neither Yank nor Boche dared fire promiscuously for fear of slaying a comrade.

WHEN Sergeant Mack had first struck, Babe had launched himself at a shadowy form he had marked for his own. His trench knife rose and fell viciously and was withdrawn to parry the thrust of a wild-eyed Heinie. Here Babe was at a disadvantage. He didn't have the weight or the brawn for this kind of work. Slowly he gave way, reeling backward under the savage advance of his enemy, and he was falling when the Boche suddenly disengaged his knife from Babe's steel and lunged. The blade pierced Babe's left side, scraping a rib, but the force of the blow was lost because Babe was falling backward. As the Boche fell forward with the force of his thrust an automatic blazed nearby. Sergeant Mack had fired one careful shot. Babe was crushed in the muck by the weight of the Boche whose fingers relaxed on the hilt of his knife as life fled.



Fighting free from the dying weight, Babe staggered to his feet and lurched forward. At one side of him he saw two struggling men. In the darkness he couldn't distinguish one from the other. Toward these men he saw another crawling on hands and knees. Was it a Yank going to the aid of a Yank or a Boche closing in to make it two to one? Babe couldn't make out but he determined to find out. Stumbling toward the trio, he made out the form of his sergeant and saw a coal scuttle helmet on the head of the crawling man. Clutching his trench knife in a hand slippery with slime, he lurched ahead. In his haste he slipped and fell full on his face. In desperation he struggled to his feet and dived forward, launching himself through the air in one final effort, to land on the back of the crawling Boche. For one agonizing moment the two grappled, and Babe wondered how it would seem to be kicking daisies. He was in the hugging grasp of a pair of powerful arms, and helpless. His knife hand was in a cramped position, the clutching arms were forcing the air from his lungs, crushing his ribs, and then the powerful Boche slipped and they rolled in the mire. Babe felt a blade piercing his left shoulder and waited for it to go deeper. He was dazed now. He couldn't understand why the Boche didn't finish him; couldn't understand why the German's clutching arms relaxed. It was moments later that he realized he had maintained a frenzied grasp on his knife and that when they slipped and rolled the blade had been driven through the German's back and out his breast to pierce Babe's shoulder.

Dazedly Babe looked about him, his eyes straining to pierce the darkness. Nearby he saw the huge form of a man swinging another clear of the ground, to hold him poised aloft a moment, helpless, then to hurl him down with terrific force and leap with slashing trench knife. A moment later, and Sergeant Mack, who had finished his Boche in such an unusual but effective way, crawled to the side of Babe. The two lay there panting for a moment. The fighting was over. Ser-

geant Mack, after clumsily fastening wads of gauze to Babe's two wounds, made a brief search. Returning he informed Babe that they alone had survived the vicious fight in the darkness. Brave Yanks had met brave Germans and fought to the finish.

"Tub and that messkit he craved to salivate sure spilled the beans," the sergeant panted. "And you're all crocked up so you better crawl back, Babe."

"Crawl back where?" Babe grunted.

"Back to our trenches," snorted the sergeant. "I've got work to do. Cap'n Babbitt sent me out to do some scouting and it ain't done yet."

"He sent me with you," said Babe. "I'm fit, Sarge, honest I am. My left side's sort of stiff but the gauze'll dry on that and it'll be all right. Where do we go from here?"

"Cripes!" the sergeant growled, "you've got yourself carved up and're all set for a session between clean sheets in the hospital singin' to the boys. Better beat it."

"I'll not beat it unless you order me to," said Babe. "If you figure I can't help I'll go back—but you just might need me, Sarge."

Sergeant Mack sniffed. "Come on then, Babe. We gotta get goin'. While we was fightin' neither our doughboys or the Boche dared sweep this neck of hell for fear of hittin' their own, but they'll open up soon's they find out it's all over." And with that he began snaking his way over to the left and closer to the enemy trenches.

After many seemingly interminable minutes of crawling forward Babe saw the shadowy form of Sergeant Mack disappear as though the earth had opened up and swallowed him. There came the sound of a splash followed in a moment by a muffled oath. Babe was wise enough to No-man's land to know what had happened. After waiting for a moment, his face buried in the mud, Babe crawled forward with renewed caution, fairly certain that the sounds had not been heard.

Within a few feet his fingers encountered the ragged rim of a crater-like shell hole.

"Hist—Sarge," he whispered, "you all right?"

"Sure, I'm all right," came from the sergeant. "Look out for the edge of this pest hole. She crumbled with me and I took a bath in this mess. Come on over, the water's fine."

Slowly feeling his way around, Babe put his feet over the edge and slipped gently down beside the sergeant into the foul hole where they were safe for the time.

"Listen, Babe," the sergeant muttered, "this hole in the ground is made to order. We can't be far from the Heinie rat ditch. You sit tight here and I'll do the gopher act and see what I can see."

"O. K., Sarge," the diminutive private agreed, thankful for a chance to rest. He crouched on the sloping side of the hole, holding his feet out of the filthy mixture of mud and water in the bottom and helped the sergeant up.

"SEE anything, Sarge?" he whispered after a tense wait.

"Might just as well be blind as a hoot owl as to try to see anything," the sergeant began. Suddenly he stiffened. Slightly ahead and to his left he saw a faint glow that lasted a split second and was gone. But the sergeant's eyes, trained to see much under difficulties, had strained and registered plenty. Hastily he scrambled down beside Babe.

"Listen, Babe, there's a punk Heinie off to the left there," he whispered. "The poor sap just signed his death warrant because he was lucky enough to have a cigarette and dumb enough to light it. I just had a glimpse of his helmet."

"What does that make us, Sarge?" asked the private.

"It makes us plenty, Babe. I figure that Heinie to be out in a listening post, a sap running out from the main trench. We'll slide over and nail him. It'll be easier to get into the main trench through

the sap and we may have a chance to get behind the lines and do ourselves some good."

"Yeah," agreed Babe, "we'll do ourselves good all right. Let's go."

"All right, keed, but listen—if you so much as breathe, we're goin' to be a pair of daisy kickers and I don't mean if. What I mean is—be quiet and follow me."

Two shadows that were the Yanks moved slowly over the rim of the shell hole and with infinite caution approached the sap at the left. Sergeant Mack, with a clear picture of the location indelibly impressed on his mind in that single moment when the German's cigarette had glowed, led the way.

Actually it took Sergeant Mack and Private Cooper thirty minutes to crawl less than that many feet. They were as quiet as it was humanly possible to be, but circumstances were somewhat in their favor. A German on outpost duty who hadn't registered the sound of Sergeant Mack's fall into the shell hole and who was careless enough to light a cigarette out in the sap was dumb enough to ascribe any slight noises he heard to the rats. The German never knew what hit him in the neck, sending his breath hissing from his nose and leaving him unconscious.

"Come on," Sergeant Mack grunted to Babe as he slid down into the shallow sap, smothering the stunned Boche under him. Babe arrived, and together the panting men tied and gagged the careless German, neither caring to harm him further despite the peril of their position. They could use their knives when duty and life demanded but not when it wasn't necessary.

Step by step they worked their way along the sap toward the main trench, hoping against hope that they might reach it and crawl beyond, undetected. But the chances were decidedly against any such good fortune.

Once a brace of rats—big as year-old cats—raced by them and they froze into position, expecting an overwhelming attack. But nothing happened. As they

neared the big trench they became more cautious.

"Funny we don't hear a sound," the sergeant whispered with lips to Babe's ear and scarcely moving. "We're close enough now to hear them Boche but I don't hear 'em."

"Maybe they heard us coming," Babe whispered back, "or maybe they're just goldbrickin' like our gang does sometimes; maybe half asleep."

"Looks funny though," the sergeant commented and resumed the stealthy advance. But reaching the main trench they found nothing.

"We could hop over and drift back," Babe muttered. "There must be Heinies down the trench on either side but we can get over and then hole up until tomorrow. Maybe we could learn plenty for Cap'n Babbitt and get back."

"Maybe we could," Sergeant Mack agreed, "but maybe we can learn plenty here too. I was damn sure these trenches was lousy with Boche, and that's the captain's dope too. If the Boche ain't here there's something funny going on and we got to find out what it is."

"Just as you say, Sarge," Babe agreed, "right or left?"

"Let's go right and see what happens," the sergeant directed, "and when we hear 'em, we'll stop. It's dark as the inside of a whale's belly and we can duck over the top and get away with it—maybe."

"Yeah—maybe," came from Babe. "Lead on—I'm with you."

Quietly the Yanks sidled along the trench, traversing two or three rods without seeing or hearing anything. Sergeant Mack was stumped for the moment. He halted, reached behind him to get Babe's arm, and drew him close. Leaning close, he whispered to Babe.

"Now I know there's something damn fishy about this. That dumb Heinie wasn't out in the sap all by his lonely without others being around somewhere. This trench is due to be lousy with Krauts and if it ain't that means they've dropped back. And if they have, Cap'n Babbitt ought to know about it."

"I'll say he should, Sarge," said Babe, "but if we go back now we can't tell him much except this trench is empty but for the one Heinie we tied up. That don't sound reasonable. We gotta look around some more."

Suddenly Sergeant Mack had an idea more correct than he had any way of knowing at the time. "Babe, I'll bet them three Iron Crosses I took off them Boche at Hill No. 414 against a pack of those Humps you got back in your outfit that the Boche have pulled back and left this trench with only a smattering of men in saps and manning a few machine guns to put up a front. Then if we attack, the going would be easy, and we'd crash through, and rush right into a trap."



"SARGE, you're right," Babe exclaimed, almost forgetting in his excitement to keep his voice down to a whisper. "You know that ridge that runs at right angles to the trenches less than half a mile away? That'd be a swell plant for machine guns off to the left. And it's swampy off to the right, with a lot of brush. Any main drive would have to be made over this trench and between the swamp and the ridge."

"You're not so dumb for a bantam," muttered the sergeant. "We'd be caught napping if we're right. Cripes! Them Boche could slaughter our outfit and then some. They'd have machine guns planted in the brush along the swamp and hidden along the ridge and we'd be caught in between."

"I'll bet if Captain Babbitt had suspected that trick he wouldn't have told us to hole up tomorrow and come back later," said Babe. "If he knew what we know he'd pass the word along and the brass hats would stew up plenty bad medicine for Mister Heinie. Let's take a look-see over toward the ridge."

"Right, keed—" suddenly Sergeant Mack's fingers tightened on Babe's arm until he almost screamed with pain. "P-ss-t. Someone's coming. Up you go."

Private Babe Cooper swarmed up the frame of the husky sergeant and over the rear top of the enemy trench in a twinkling. Bracing himself he gave the sergeant a helping hand. Just as it seemed the sergeant would make it, his feet slipped and he started to fall. Frantically the sergeant clutched Babe's wrist—his only hold. Babe dug in his toes and chewed his lower lip to keep back a cry when the full weight of the sergeant swung from his tortured arm. With every passing second the sound of approaching Boche grew louder. Babe groaned inwardly and mentally cursed a fate that seemed destined to keep them from returning to Captain Babbitt with their valuable information. But with a sudden movement Sergeant Mack regained his footing. For a moment his grip on Babe's wrist relaxed, then with an agility surprising in such bulk he swarmed out of the trench and lay panting beside Babe just as the dim forms of the Boche could be distinguished a few feet away.

Tortured by suspense the two Yanks lay there by the edge of the trench, uncertain as to whether they had been seen or heard. But the approaching Germans had been talking among themselves and the sounds of their own feet had drowned out the minor sounds made by the two buddies in clambering out of the trench.

The enemy infantrymen passed by, five of them in single file, within reach of the two Yanks. Babe was barely able to restrain a foolhardy impulse to reach out and sock one of them just on general principles. But such a move would not only have been fatal, it would have prevented the taking of important information to the Yank forces.

Babe and the sergeant breathed more freely when the last of the five scuttle-helmeted infantrymen had passed. They could stretch cramped limbs. They saw the Germans halt a few feet away and unsling their rifles, evidently preparing to stay. This only strengthened their conviction that the trench was being lightly held for some definite reason.

Awaiting a favorable opportunity, the two faded away in the darkness and be-

gan making their cautious approach to the ridge. Every instant they were on guard, knowing that discovery was imminent now that they were prowling behind the enemy lines. With the stealth of slinking jungle animals they made their way to the ridge, which, as dawn was approaching, was faintly distinguishable. Yard by yard they crept through brush and over slightly rolling ground. Sergeant Mack was in the lead with Babe right at his heels. Babe was so close behind that he bumped into the sergeant and grunted when the husky halted suddenly.

"Gotta hunch, Babe," muttered the sergeant. "I thought I saw a movement ahead but I can't place it now. I gotta hunch we're close to some of them Heinies."

"Play the hunch then, Sarge," said Babe. "I can just make out something up there too. Say—Sarge! I haven't ever seen one, but do you know from what I've heard that there hump looks like a pill box to me."

"Doggone if I don't believe you're right," the sergeant exclaimed after studying the hazy shadow toward which Babe pointed. "You sit tight. I've got my bearings and I'll crawl on a ways and see."

"What's the idea of me stayin' here?" Babe protested.

"Do as I tell you, runt!" growled Sergeant Mack. "I got a good reason. If I get mine you'll still have a chance to get back an' warn Cap'n Babbitt."

THE sergeant was so emphatic Babe protested no further. He crouched there in the brush, straining his eyes to keep track of the quickly disappearing sergeant. After what seemed an hour a thickening shadow crawled back. It was the sergeant.

"There's a concrete pillbox on the knob of this hill," the sergeant panted. "I'll bet there's fifteen Boche in there with at least three machine guns. I got so close I could've dropped one of my grenades through a loophole and blown 'em to hell."

"Cripes," Babe exclaimed. "Watch me go." And with the words he started crawling in the direction from which Sergeant Mack had just returned. The sergeant reached out a ham-like fist and grabbed Babe by the belt of his breeches and dragged him back without ceremony.

"What's the idea, wart?" the sergeant demanded. "What were you startin' out to do?"

"I was goin' back to drop an iron egg in there among them Heinies," replied the disgruntled private.

"Cripes!" the sergeant snorted. "An' a little while ago I said you had brains."

"Why haven't I?"

"Now, children, give me your attention!" Sergeant Mack piped, trying to make his bass voice shrill like that of a school teacher. "Little boys who drop iron eggs into concrete pillboxes might wipe out the gents in the box but they'd sure as hell (he was forgetting his role of teacher) start the war all over again. You'd give an alarm that wouldn't leave us a chance in a million to get back and what we know is more important than that pillbox. That's why I didn't part with one of my iron eggs. Savvy?"

"I got you, Sarge."

"All right, keed. You hang tight to Sergeant Mack and he'll lead you back home. It'll be the first time you made it on your own dogs too."

"Aw Sarge—that's a dirty crack."

"I know it was, Babe, but I don't want you goin' funny on me. I'm bossing this expedition and I'm convinced our dope is right. If these Heinies have pillboxes along this ridge they're loaded for bear and only waitin' for our boys to walk into the trap. If we get back we've stolen the bait. Come on!"

Back the two Yanks crawled over the ground they had recently covered, returning to the enemy trenches. Possibly, knowing that the trench was lightly held, they were not as cautious as they had been when approaching it from No-man's land. At any rate a surprising reception was waiting for them.

They slid down into the trench and fol-

lowed along it looking for a sap leading out into No-man's land when hell broke loose. Something leaped on them from the top of the trench and they found themselves apparently falling through one side of the trench. Two Boche had jumped down on them with force calculated to crash them through the camouflaged entrance to a dugout.

Guttural German oaths mixed with Yankee cussing when Mack and Babe came up fighting and closed with their adversaries. Mack grappled with the larger of the two Boche, seeking by sheer strength to bear him down and throttle him before he could utter a cry. But while he was so occupied Babe swung rights and lefts to the jaw of a surprised German, but without sufficient force to knock him down. With a muttered curse the German drew a Luger pistol and fired wildly, missing Babe's midriff, but riddling both legs at the knee. Snarling with rage, Babe dragged his crippled legs after him, and clutching the Boche, pulled him down for hand-to-hand fighting. But wounded, and light as he was, Babe was no match for the brawny German who drew back his Luger and crashed it down on the Yankee private's head.

Grunting with satisfaction, the German regained his feet and planted the muzzle of the Luger in Sergeant Mack's neck. The sergeant was one hundred and ninety pounds of fighting brawn, but it wasn't bone in the head that gave him weight. He hadn't a chance, so he released his hold on the other Boche.

At the same instant more Boche crowded forward, belching out of the main dugout into the entrance of the tunnel. Leaving Babe for dead, they dragged Sergeant Mack back into the underground chamber where he was kicked onto his face before a German major, an officer equipped with a monocle, Kaiser mustachios, and an ingrowing disposition.

One of the Boche reached down and grabbed the Yank sergeant by the collar and dragged him to his feet. The sergeant doubled his sleep-inducing right fist and crooked his elbow but thought better

of it when he saw half a dozen armed men ready to spit him with bayonets or shoot him down like a dog. Shrugging his shoulders, he straightened and faced the German major with outthrust jaw.

"You win, pretty boy," he told the major, not knowing whether he was understood or not. "What's the next move?"

"The next move, my dear sergeant, is for you to inform us when you Americans relieved the French, the number of your regiment and its actual strength," the major replied in perfect English.

"So you talk white language, do you?" said Sergeant Mack. "Well, here's your answer. We relieved the French on August 4, 1914; my regiment is number thirteen hundred and thirteen, an' it's strong enough to knock your cockeyed army into a peak and knock the peak off. Ask me some hard ones!"



THE monocle dropped from the officer's eye and veins stood out on his forehead. The muscles of his throat worked and it seemed that he might pass out in an apoplectic rage. At a motion of his hand a German noncom stepped forward and struck Sergeant Mack a cruel blow squarely on the mouth. Instantly others closed in to hold the sergeant's arms. Again and again the enemy noncom struck his defenseless face. Growling and cursing at his impotency, the sergeant strained to get his arms free. He longed to swing just one blow to the cowardly German's molars, but he was defenseless.

"Enough," the German major cried, "perhaps now you will show proper respect to your superiors, you Yankee swine! Now what is the number of your regiment?"

Sergeant Mack spat out a tooth, looked the enemy major squarely in the eye and growled, "Go to hell, an' take your yellow bruisers with you!"

Instantly one of the Germans stepped forward and slugged the American sergeant with the butt of a Luger. Sergeant Mack slumped to the floor and lay there

twitching for a moment, half conscious. He didn't know whether to open his eyes or lie doggo, but soon a vicious kick in the ribs made him start up involuntarily.

A muddy German foot pushed him back to the floor and a bayonet was pressed to his throat. Slowly the pressure increased. The point of the bayonet pierced the skin and a little trickle of scarlet ran down Sergeant Mack's neck. Steadily the torturing pressure increased, but the sergeant locked his lips and kept his eyes fixed in a glare on the natty German major who watched with a cruel smile curving his thin, bloodless lips. It was apparent to the sergeant that the officer wouldn't order the infantrymen to stop the torture short of death unless he chose to answer revealing questions.

"Hell of a way for a fighting man to go out," he thought as he clenched his teeth to hold back any involuntary cry of surrender.

Slowly the bayonet pressed deeper and then suddenly a sharp report reverberated in the dugout. Slowly the German with the bayonet released his hold on his rifle and crumpled, falling like a sack of grain over Sergeant Mack's legs.

With a gasp of relief Sergeant Mack sucked in a great gulp of air and whirled to face the entrance of the dugout toward which the living Germans were staring. There he saw a sight that terrified the Boche but inspired him. Private Babe Cooper, his face a mask of mingled grease, mud and dried scarlet stains, scarlet which had flowed from a vicious gash on the forehead, his teeth bared and glaring whitely in a vicious grin. Babe Cooper, lying on his belly propped up on his elbows. In his right hand he held a Luger pistol and in his left was clutched a hand grenade. Moving first one elbow and then the other he inched forward, dragging his helpless, bullet-riddled legs behind him—bantam legs that were light and easy to drag.

"Drop your guns!" Babe snarled in a pain-racked voice. "Drop 'em or I'll blow you all to hell!"

"Get them!" the German major cried in a quavering voice. "Get them, men."

Automatically obeying the officer's orders, one of the Germans swung a clubbed Mauser with a crash against Sergeant Mack's head while another dived for Babe endeavoring to pull the trigger of his gun. It looked like taps for the Yanks, but in that moment Babe lurched to throw his weight on his left elbow. The German slug just grazed his chest as he fired a shot that struck the Boche squarely between the eyes and tore a terrible hole through his head. The other Germans, including the major, were paralyzed with fright by this Yank which nothing seemed to kill.

"Another break like that and I'll let loose this grenade and wipe us all out," Babe cried. And hearing his deadly cool voice issuing from a face of terrible ferocity, the Germans didn't doubt him. Hastily the Boche dropped their weapons, not understanding his words, but feeling clearly their menace.

The major spoke to his men and their faces blanched when they learned the threat of the wounded doughboy. Under Babe's orders the men stood with hands outstretched, facing the dugout wall. The major, under Babe's instructions, endeavored to revive the sergeant, but without success. Then at Babe's command he applied first aid dressings to the private's wounded legs while Babe watched with eagle eyes, ready for any attempt at treachery, fully determined to release the grenade if necessary—even if it meant his own life. He had seen part of the torturing Sergeant Mack had been put through as he lay near the entrance to the dugout hastily formulating a desperate plan of action. The slugging of the sergeant had hampered his scheme, however. But now he planned to carry it through. He dared not remain in the dugout, for discovery was certain even in that lightly held trench. Someone would come in search of the major and then it would be lights out for Babe Cooper and Sergeant Mack.

THE sergeant was still unconscious when the trembling German officer

finished ministering to Babe's wounds and the private knew he could delay action no longer. The fact that the major understood English simplified matters.

Training his Luger on the officer Babe issued his orders. "Tell your four men to carry my sergeant out ahead of us," he snarled. "Tell 'em to treat him gentle. Tell 'em that I'm coming out after 'em on your back and that if they try any funny business I'll heave my grenade at 'em and blow out your brains. And listen, funny face," he hissed, "I'm almost hoping that you try some trick."

The major's face blanched. He knew he was confronted by a death-defying, crazy Yank who wouldn't hesitate to carry out his threat. But if he obeyed he was lost for all time. He could never live down the disgrace of being forced to carry an American to safety to save his own hide. But the major, although a tartar behind the lines, wasn't made of the stuff of many a Junker, and very emphatically he explained the Babe's demands to his four underlings. He charged them to be careful of the sergeant and not to attempt any trickery that would result in death.

Terribly weakened by loss of blood and the shock of his wounds, Private Babe Cooper wondered if he would be able to stick it out, if he would be able to stand the jarring of the move over the rough and shell-pitted terrain of Norman's land. But the plight of Sergeant Mack, his hatred of the Boche engendered by his glimpse of the torturing of his sergeant, and the fever of battle, acted as a narcotic.

"Let's go," he finally ordered, "and be careful of the sergeant!"

Carrying Sergeant Mack on an improvised stretcher of two blouses, the sleeves of which were tied together, the four German soldiers started out of the dugout. Painfully Babe got on the back of the major and followed, constantly on the alert for treachery. In the trench he

suspected one of the Germans of an attempt to pick up a Luger that had been dropped in the melee a few minutes earlier. Instead of killing the major Babe dropped the German with one slug. This object lesson served to impress the four remaining Germans more than anything else with the deadly earnestness of Private Babe Cooper. Private Babe Cooper,—once more returning to his trenches after a raid—but not under his own power.

With some difficulty the party got out of the trench and then began the strangest procession ever to cross No-man's land. Two Germans marched in the lead, each supporting one corner of the improvised stretcher on which Sergeant Mack lay unconscious; one was at the rear, supporting his feet. Following closely behind came Babe, riding on the back of the German major who clutched the private's legs and prayed that he wouldn't make a misstep that would prompt the crazy Yank to discharge the Luger which kept bumping into his ear, gouging it, as they lurched forward in the increasing light of the dawn.

American doughboys on outpost duty thought they had been drinking too much vin rouge and cognac when they saw this strange procession coming toward them in the dim light. Sending back the alarm, they withheld fire, for they were certain that no patrolling or attacking party would advance in such formation. Then someone made out an American steel hat perched on the back of the "rider's" head. Gradually other details became clearer. Someone shouted and ran forward to aid Babe in his progress toward the main trenches where a wild yell went up at the safe return of Private Babe Cooper and Sergeant Mack.

Babe was gently lowered into the trench and the sergeant rushed off to a dugout for first aid. The Germans were speeded to Captain Babbitt's dugout where the major, demoralized by his treatment at the hands of the Yankee private, told everything he knew when prompted by questions based on Babe's

hurried report that had been relayed to Captain Babbitt.



THAT night on the strength of the information secured through the valorous scouting of Babe and the sergeant, the Americans laid down a tremendous barrage that wiped out the machine gun emplacements along the ridge at the left and in the brush bordering the swamp at the right. The doughboys went over, and instead of being trapped, advanced to a glorious victory with a minimum loss of men.

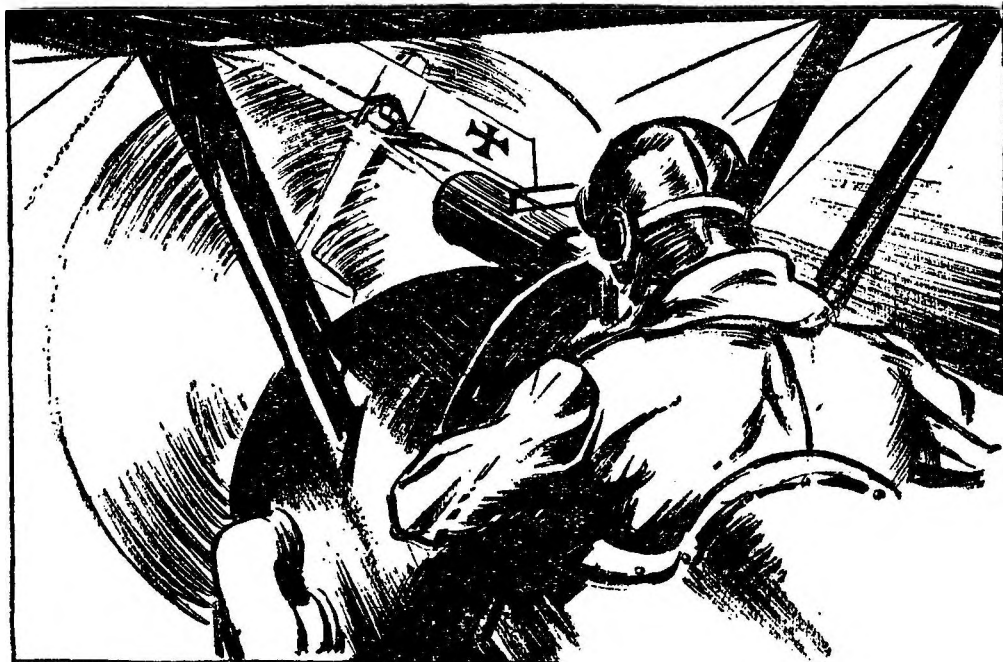
Two days later Captain Babbitt, accompanied by the general and the chief of staff, paid a visit to a hospital behind the lines where they moved immediately to two beds. On one of these lay Sergeant Mack, head swathed in bandages, and on the other lay Private Babe Cooper, whose bandaged and splinted bantam legs were scarcely big enough to make twin ridges in the covers.

Pausing between the two cots, the officers extended eager hands in congratulations and pinned medals to the covers. Captain Babbitt smiled at Babe.

"I'm proud of you, my boy," said the captain, "and I'm glad you were able to carry out your wish to do something for the sergeant even if you couldn't carry him in on your back." The captain turned to the general. "Private Cooper was bewailing the fact that he never came in from a raid under his own power—he'd been carried in three times."

"Ahem," the general cleared his throat, "you are to be congratulated, Captain Babbitt, for having such first class fighting men. If a few more men come back to our trenches using German majors for donkeys we'll be in Berlin before Christmas. I'm proud of you, Sergeant Mack Stone, and I'm particularly proud of you, Private Babe Cooper. When you're out of the hospital you are both to have a month in Paris, and if your captain doesn't see to it that your pockets are properly lined for the occasion, your general will. That's a promise."

The wildest flight ever made—a bombing raid without any bombs—hurls Lew Pendle and his air devils into a mad vortex of death-defying maneuvers.



Like an avenging demon Lew hurled his scout at the twisting Fokker. "Cold meat," he exulted as the Hun suddenly zoomed into a climbing stall.

BOMB PATROL

by GIL BREWER

THE regular dawn patrol would have been a farce. There were only three ships left in the 39th American Combat Squadron after the hell of warfare that had been raging over the sector during the past week. They would have been easy meat for the pack-hunting Huns that were flocking in from all quarters of the sky.

That was the reason why Lew Pendle, intrepid flight leader, had chosen to fly alone. Reconnaissance was necessary and while replacements were on the way up, one ship was enough to risk at a

time. Also the situation on the ground was critical.

Pendle could see that with half an eye. As he circled his plane above the pit-like valley holding the town of Very, he gazed down into a reeling inferno. His lean body was apprehensively tense behind the controls, his hands closed so tightly over the stick that his knuckles glowed white. There was a smoldering fury in his narrowed, gray eyes.

The concentrated fire from enemy howitzer batteries was looping up over the abutting hills to come slamming

down into a clutter of ruin. Sturdy stone buildings were leveled to chips and dust. Streets were lost in the jumble of debris. Orchards were racked to kindling and fields were lacerated and blackened; sterile with the picric from the shells.

He scowled bitterly as his gaze roved toward a pine-crested ridge behind which those deadly German howitzers were clustered. American artillery was slamming at this bulging buttress of earth, pounding down behind it. But the storm of fire they loosed could not reach the pot-bellied guns that were hurling their cargoes of hot steel into the bed of Very.

"They're like lice in a shirt-seam," he growled beneath the rumble of the plane's motor.

He yanked back on the stick to send his Spad climbing another thousand feet. Then he throttled down to drift slowly in the skies, his brows corrugated with thought. Above the muffled rumble of the Hiss he could hear the weird chortling of the Hun canisters as they looped lazily over into the battered town. He could also distinguish the shrill scream of shells from the American six-point-twos, firing ineffectually.

"Waste!" he snarled.

Yet he knew that those German howitzers would have to be silenced if the gap through Very was to be opened. And it had to be opened. Early the day before, on the slopes beyond that sunken town, the American line had been broken. It had crumpled back for almost a mile with the gray-green platoons creeping along behind it. If the Boche counter attack seeped on through the gap the American drive in the Argonne would be split wide open with its flanks in the air.

He glared again in the direction of the hidden howitzers, their positions marked by the pall of smoke rising above their hot muzzles. He pictured the gun crews toiling like beavers at the business of reloading.

"Can't strafe them with three ships," he muttered. "They'd be like rats in a

sewer—out again as soon as we slid away."

He cursed savagely. He had been ordered to look over the ground in order that some means might be devised to silence those hammering guns. Fresh reserves were to be hurled through the gap that day. But if they were to be thrown into the devil's cauldron that boiled in Very—

"Those howitzers'll batter them to hell and gone," he snarled.

Why so necessary to occupy or pass through that deadly gap; why, instead, should not the advancing reserves flank the town and form again in the area beyond it?

Pendle knew the answer to that, too. During the night just ended, supply trains had been run up almost into the face of the counter-attacking Boche to establish a base for rations and ammunition under the precipitous slope which marked the northern limits of the town. This base had been planted for the reserves that were forming to follow through.

The indirect fire from the howitzers had not been expected, then. Its reality had come with the dawn. And although the tumbling shells could not penetrate this gigantic cache, even as the American guns were failing to spot the batteries that sped it, neither could it be reached by the reserves for whom it had been planned.

The situation for the time being was a deadlock. But if those protected howitzers were silenced—

Pendle suddenly knew the only solution to the problem.

"Bombs!" he rasped. He laughed harshly, mirthlessly.

There wasn't a bombing crate north of Toul. Even so, such heavy ships as were available in other sectors were either French or British. And by the time they could be requisitioned the need for them must have passed.

He tried to think of some other remedy, his eyes somber, his face grim. He shook his head ruefully.

"Bombs!" he muttered again.

HE brought his ship about in a tight bank and headed back for the drome. He dived close to the ground and hedgehopped home with the throttle wide. During his lone reconnaissance he had been wary of planes that might plunge from the overhanging clouds. He was taking no chances now.

Landing safely, he vaulted from the cockpit and strode toward the office. But before he reached it, Major Trask stepped out to meet him, his right arm in a sling as the result of a Spandau's slug that had ripped through his biceps the day before. With him were Cory and Elbert, lanky, hard-bitten veterans of sky-combat, both of them, and the only two duty pilots left with Pendle in the battered squadron.

"How about it, Pendle?" queried the major sharply. Short and wiry, terrier-like in build, he exhibited an inherent aggressiveness that wounds could not efface.

"No good," growled Pendle. "Those howitzers have the town completely washed up."

"What about our artillery?" snapped the major.

"Can't touch them." Pendle's hands came together to form a narrow cleft. "They're in a pocket and blazing away with everything they've got."

"Are they getting at the base of supplies?"

"No. They can't reach that. But neither can anybody else."

The major's face clouded.

"By God, that town's got to be opened up," he declared. "The line will be on the move in an hour."

Pendle nodded grimly.

"There's only one chance of doing it," he said with a thin edge to his voice. "And that's with bombs."

The major scowled impatiently.

"Bombs be damned!" he snapped. "We haven't got them and we can't get them in time."

"Just the same—" began Pendle.

The clamor of the telephone in the office cut him short. The major turned indoors to take the call. He seemed

scarcely to have gone before he reappeared again, his face pale and tense, his eyes haunted. He stared hard at his three pilots before he spoke.

"That was staff," he said huskily. "There's a Gotha bomber headed toward Very; Fokkers for escort. It's probably a raid on that base of supplies that the howitzers can't reach. Orders are to stop it."

Pendle's hands clenched into tense fists as he watched the faces of Cory and Elbert pale. He knew what they were thinking—Fokkers for escort; probably a full squadron, maybe more. The chances of crashing through to the bomber would be slim, with death the almost certain penalty for failure.

There was a long moment of silence during which the major averted his gaze. Then Pendle spoke.

"What about it, fellows?" he asked huskily. "Shall we make a try for it?"

Cory and Elbert nodded slowly, their acquiescence seeming almost involuntary. The major stiffened as though about to protest. His lips cracked open, but no words came. There was a light in his eyes, however, that spoke volumes.

"Let's go," snapped Pendle.

Fuel for Pendle's ship and they were off, the tiny flight of three Spads climbing northward in quest of a giant Gotha bomber, reckless of the inevitable clash with escort Fokkers which must far outnumber them.

Pendle flew at point. He led the way out and upward over a long, steep climb. He planned to have the Spads cross the lines high above the clouds, well atop the uppermost cover for the Hun bomber.

There would be a lone chance for the success of their mission; a streaking dive that would see them flashing down through the covering Fokkers to thrust their Vickers against the fat, black hulk of the bomber. Fire, then, in stabbing bursts; the hope that the quick-flung lead might send the black marauder tumbling from the skies. The hope, too, that they might be able to win free from the vengeful Spandaus that would spit

death at them from German cockpits.

"One chance in a thousand," muttered Pendle.

He knew what to expect. The Fokkers' pilots would be wary of just such an attempt against them as was now being made. Among them there would be veteran sky-killers, each a dangerous foe even in equal combat; with additional guns at their back, the odds in their favor would be overwhelming.

But as these thoughts flashed through his mind, Pendle caught a glimpse of the flame-shot, smoking fury that was Very. It was like a miniature volcano gone mad under a thousand spiteful fires. Angry, red tongues flickered along the valley's bed. A fearsome pall of black smoke hovered overhead.

All this was the work of the Hun howitzers. Their pounding fire was closing the gap to the American reserves. And prowling down out of the gray skies was a Gotha bomber bent on completing the devastation, sworn to destroy the base of supplies the howitzers could not reach.



MUTTERED curses trickled in a stream through Pendle's tight lips. A moment later the war-racked earth was lost to view beneath the gray mists that hung at 4,000 feet. He wiped the beading dampness from his goggles and thrust on upward, Cory and Elbert ploughing along in his wake.

Among the dank clouds the suspense became more acute. Visibility was gone. He could hear nothing above the throaty bellowing of the full-gunned Hissos. Yet he knew that somewhere near, and drawing closer and closer with every passing minute, was the Hun group bound for the base in Very.

Then the murk gradually thinned. Swirling tendrils of mist whipped by in the slip-stream. Abruptly he glimpsed the blue sky overhead as the Spad nosed up into the clear. He leveled off to rake the roof of the clouds, glancing back to

make sure that Cory and Elbert were close on his trail.

For a full minute his anxious gaze probed about through all quarters of the sky. There was nothing to be seen. He signalled for reduced throttles and cut his own, crouching over the controls with ears keen for the snoring drone of the Mercedes.

He heard it. The hoarse purring was faint, but unmistakable. And then he glimpsed the dark shadows creeping through the clouds—the shadows of Fokker scouts.

The wings of his Spad wagged under a rocking stick. His hand lifted to flash forward and down in the signal for attack. He jerked the throttle wide and slammed the stick against the crash pad.

As the Hissos roared under full gun his ship stood on its churning prop and plunged like a rocket. The ships of Cory and Elbert followed suit, all three screaming down through the clouds with pilots wary of the cruising Fokkers, straining for the first glimpse of the giant bomber.

Pendle sat with his feet braced against the rudder bars, his fingers ready upon the trigger-buttons. There was no time for fear now. He was irrevocably committed to the mad mission.

He saw a Fokker beneath him reel out of his way in a vertical bank. It disappeared like a wraith in the whirling mist. But he knew that it would be around and down like a meteor; he heard the warning clamor of its guns.

He flashed out into the clear. A flight of four Fokkers were skimming along directly in the line of his dive, within immediate range. A thousand feet lower and slightly in the van flew the Gotha bomber.

"Now!" he rasped.

His fingers whipped tight against the triggers. The muzzles of the Vickers seemed to leap against the foremost of the Fokkers as they spat their crimson hate. The guns of Cory and Elbert roared in unison, all three of the Spads storming in without warning.

Pendle saw the ship he attacked washed from the skies in a grisly spatter of flaming petrol and dribbling wreckage. As he kicked rudder for the race to the bomber he glanced back over his shoulder.

Cory had scored—his victim already writhed into a spin—and was driving around in a wing-shuddering bank to team with Elbert. The tailing Fokker of this first flight was driving in, and down out of the clouds another quartet was plunging with guns ablaze.

He turned back toward the bomber. Almost upon it, now, it seemed more monstrous than ever. Its huge bulk looked as though it must be disdainful of the leaden pellets flung from the tiny Spad.

But Pendle knew that its heart beat under the gray-green tunic of the pilot at the controls; that its fangs would be bared by the gunner in the rear pit. He was aware also of its deadly claws, which swinging beneath its great body, were ready to rip through the base in Very.

He plunged against it at a speed which threatened to wash the Spad's wings from their sockets. He swerved to attack from the side, easing the stick back for passage across the broad back.

The gunner, first!

AS HIS Vickers roared the after-pit Spandaus seemed to blaze in his face. He heard the clipping tear of fabric, the crackle of slugs against the motor cowling, the vicious snapping of the leaden gale streaming past his head.

But every second of targeting counted. He held no thought of safety for himself. Eyes, brain and hands were knit to the centering of his guns, to the whip-line of the tracers. He saw them fluff out against the Gotha's gun-pit coaming. He eased back on the stick to lift the hosing lead against the cup of the gunner.

At the last possible moment he yanked the stick close. The Spad vaulted with the warning creak of strained pinions, the brittle snapping of strained guys. It

zoomed as though shot from a catapult, flashing tight against the bomber's back.

Up and up it roared, reeling into a tight loop. As its gear swung uppermost he glimpsed the plunging Fokkers. He saw the ruddy flickering of their guns. He heard the savage snapping of Spandau lead splitting the sky around him.

He caught a moment's glimpse of Cory and Elbert lancing up to meet the attack from the clouds. Battling fools! They were taking on impossible odds to give him a clear chance at the Gotha. They were climbing in an attempt to draw the Fokkers away from him.

But one of the black scouts came flashing on down. He saw its dark pattern across the nose of his Spad. His Vickers snarled again. As his ship reeled over from the apex of its loop, he held the Hun plane in the muzzle of his guns. His fire riddled it from prop to skid.

Down again toward the bomber's back. He had to stop it this time. It had not deviated a hair from its course. Another mile and it would be over its objective; its bombs would go hurtling down upon the base in Very.

How quiet the town had become! The thought struck into his mind as he jockeyed the stick to swing his guns back against the black monster. The howitzers had fallen silent, doubtless to permit the bombing pilot a clear view of his target. The American artillery was likewise stilled. Archie was idle.

War in the sector was left to the skies. Spads and Fokkers in mad combat. The prize a lumbering Gotha.

Pendle, Cory and Elbert against odds of three to one. And they had to win. If the black-crossed bomber reached its mark there would be no need to silence the hammering howitzers. There would be nothing left to support the reserves who were forming to storm through the gap in Very.

But what if the Gotha did go down? What if its bombs never reached the base of supplies and ammunition? There would still be the howitzers. They would rage again. And how were the

massed reserves to force their way through the havoc they spewed along the valley's bed?

Pendle cursed savagely. The howitzers were a secondary matter, now. First, the bomber!

He veered in upon its tail. The Spad heaved drunkenly under the full-throated gale that smote upon the wings. But its nose came up. The blazing Vickers slashed through the broad body of the ship. The fluff-line of the tracers began to etch forward along the top of the fuselage.

He gasped. No Spandau lead scourged him from the after pit. As the Spad charged closer he saw the braced guns swinging uselessly from their cradle. He saw the arms and shoulders of the gunner hanging limply over the coaming.

His opening fire had scored. The Gotha's gunner was dead. The sky giant was defenseless from behind, below and above, from either side. There were only the guns across its blunt nose, trained in the direction of flight.

Pendle's heart beat like a trip-hammer. The big bomber was cold meat. He was slightly above it, riding its tail. And there was only the pilot crouching in the control pit, an easy mark for his ready Vickers.



HE eased back on the throttle and steadied the Spad deliberately. He leaned to the ring-sights with his fingers poised tensely over the trigger buttons. Another second—

A hoarse cry burst through his lips. Without warning a slamming blast of fire screamed past his head. His instrument board vanished in a blur of wreckage. The Spad staggered beneath the hammering of Spandau lead through its left wing. The sky around him thickened with the haze of tracers.

He shot a horrified glance over his shoulder. A Fokker was dead on his tail, the pilot grinning across the butts

of his guns. The rest of the battling ships were swirling closer. He saw another of the Fokkers reeling in as he slammed the stick hard over and kicked frantically at the rudder.

He had to dodge, now. A second's delay would spell death. The tailing Fokker was close, its fire frightful.

But the bomber! It was lumbering on. A half minute would see it swooping in over the base in Very; its bombs streaking down to complete the havoc the howitzers had wrought. He had to stop it!

But before he could move there came the shrieking of wings directly above him; the strident roar of a full-gunned Hiss. Simultaneously he heard the brittle snarl of a synchronized Vickers.

His glance leaped to the glistening pinions of a diving Spad. He glimpsed the lacy tracers lancing ahead of it, the ruddy glow of its guns. And in the same moment he saw the Fokker that tailed him reel on one wing and slip into a spin.

Strength flowed back into his leaden limbs. Cory had saved him. Cory had come down to smash the Hun killer from his back. He was looping up again to join Elbert, to stave off the rest of the Fokker escort.

Pendle's pent breath gushed from his lungs. His hands steadied on the stick, his feet to the rudders. His Spad leveled to reel back against the bulk of the bomber, his tense fingers sliding again over the trigger buttons.

The pilot of the Gotha. There was his target. He sat crouched over the controls, peering down for the moment of range; for the instant when his fingers should claw at the bomb-trips.

Pendle heard the scream of the Fokkers again at his back; the clamor of Spandaus trained to batter him from the skies. But he was beyond fear, now. The time was too short. He had to depend upon Cory and Elbert.

His ship closed in with a reeling rush. His fingers clamped tight over the trips to his guns. The Vickers snarled. They

roared to a sustained blast of fire that washed over the back of the bomber.

He saw his tracers fluff against the top of the fuselage. He saw them flicker forward. He saw them break over the coaming of the control pit.

In an instant he flashed past, Spandau fire crackling around him in a veritable gale. He ruddered around in a wing-shuddering bank. He drove in again against the bomber's flank, his guns aflame.

The Gotha staggered. Almost imperceptibly, it yawed to the left. Then with accelerating speed it slipped eastward and down. For fully a hundred yards it slid across the skies like a scaled disk, skimming earthward.

Its dipped wing came up and it canted back. It lurched to an even keel. Its growling motors strove to drag it forward.

But Pendle went down upon it like a striking falcon. Half erect over his guns, he poured a withering fire into the riddled hulk. He scourged it from end to end.

It staggered again. Its nose dipped downward. It was already past its objective and had slipped well to the east of it. It lumbered on, drifting downward. It reeled into a rushing dive for the earth. It was finished.

He dived behind it, watching for the moment when it must crash in a welter of flaming petrol and the blast of its bombs. For 2,000 feet it plunged. Then its nose canted upward. It leveled. It reeled on toward the ground, making for an open field well behind the American lines. Its wheels skimmed the earth and settled squarely. It rolled to a halt.

Archie came to life to rip the sky with flame and thunder. Pendle peered back over his shoulder to see the bursts blooming among the Fokkers. There were only four of them left. And the Spads? There was only one. Elbert had gone down.

But Cory was still aloft in his battered ship. He was plunging down to join Pendle. With the Gotha down he was free to take it on the lam.

And the Fokkers were also fleeing. With the loss of the bomber their tour of duty was at an end. Too, they had been through a terrifying experience. Archie began showering the sky around them with a hail of shrapnel.

AS Pendle set his ship against the earth a puzzled scowl settled over his face. The props of the big bomber were ticking over lazily. But there was no sign of the Hun pilot who had managed to land it safely. The body of the gunner still sagged against the edge of the after pit.

"I wonder what that bird's up to," growled Pendle.

He drew his pistol and vaulted to the ground. As he strode up to the Gotha, Cory came swooping in close by.

Pendle clambered up to the bomber's control pit. He stared. The Hun pilot was slumped dead over the stick. He apparently had just managed to land his ship before death overtook him.

Cory trotted up, frowning anxiously.

"They're done," said Pendle. "Both of them."

"The pilot—"

"It looks like he just made it to the ground."

"Didn't even have time to cut the switch," remarked Cory.

Pendle nodded grimly. Abruptly he whirled to stare in the direction of Very. The silence suddenly had been split by the scream and crash of shells breaking again into the valley.

"It's those howitzers," growled Cory.

Pendle cursed. It was just as he thought it would be. Although the base of supplies and ammunition had been saved from destruction, the reserves would never be able to reach it. Not until the howitzers were silenced. And the only way that could be accomplished—

"Bombs," he muttered.

As the word slipped through his tight lips he was already turning to Cory.

"Come on," he rasped. "Lend a hand to clear this ship. We're going to use it."

Cory understood instantly. He clambered up beside Pendle and helped with the transfer of the dead Hun pilot and gunner to the ground. This task completed he swung himself back into the after gun pit as Pendle slipped down over the controls.

The throttle slid open and the big Mercedes motors roared with the gas surging into their cylinders. The big props kicked back a rushing gale and the Gotha crept forward. It gathered speed in a lumbering charge and slid aloft. Flying strongly, it climbed in a wide circle toward the pine-crested ridge behind which the pot-bellied guns were firing.

Cory reached forward and slammed Pendle on the shoulder.

"Get down low," he shouted above the bellowing motors. "I'll gun them as we pass over."

Pendle nodded, a light of savage determination in his eyes.

But the brazen plan was not to succeed too easily. Without warning the American Archies hurled a shrieking hell of shrapnel fire all around the Gotha. Above and below and to all sides the shells coughed their flame and thunder.

Pendle whirled with a snarl, motioning for Cory to attempt signaling the ground. Cory stood erect and stripped off his helmet to whirl it over and down in the gesture that all was clear. There was the hope that some fool with binoculars might grasp what had happened.

But the Archie fire seemed to increase in fury, the bursts cracking closer under rapid range adjustments. In desperation, Pendle pushed forward on the stick to thrust the big bomber in a screaming dive. Five hundred feet from the ground he brought it up again. He pushed on toward his objective over an undulating, twisting course.

It was a little more than two miles to the deep gully that held the howitzers; less than that number of minutes of flight. But much might happen in two minutes. The Archie fire was frightful.

Cory's fist thumped again upon his shoulder. Twisting around he saw that

Cory was pointing into the northeast. Looking in the direction indicated, he spat out a startled oath.

The four Fokkers that had fled were speeding back. The Archie fire doubtless had attracted their attention. Then they must have seen the Gotha again in the air. They were closing in over a long, full-gunned dive.

Pendle jockeyed the throttle for the last ounce of power in the brutish motors. He aimed the bomber's nose for one end of the smoking ravine and held to his course relentlessly. The Archie fire was dying down and the oncoming Fokkers would be Cory's lookout from the after pit.

Five hundred yards from his objective he sent the Gotha roaring down and around. It dived like a huge battering ram to nose in over one end of the slot-like gully. It leveled off scarcely a thousand feet above the belching howitzers.

He could see them plainly. So secure had the gun crews considered themselves that they had not even resorted to camouflage. There were three batteries. The gunners were toiling like ants over the squat cradles from which the ugly, blunt pieces vomited their heavy projectiles.



PENDLE crouched down instinctively with the rush of black wings close to the Gotha's flanks. The Fokkers were on hand. And as they leveled out of their dive, they had split up, two forming on either side. As his fingers trembled upon the bomb trips, he expected to see the sleek scouts swirl against him with blazing guns.

Wondering at Cory's silence he glanced back to see him crouching low with his fingers laid across his lips. He nodded tensely. Cory had taken the chance that the Fokker pilots would not know of the bomber's mission. He was waiting for the first of the bombs to slam out the truth. Then he would go into action.

Pendle felt an icy prickle race along his spine. The escort pilots for the Gotha thought the ship had circled back to pick up its convoy before trying again for the base in Very. They had no idea of what was about to happen.

He clenched his teeth and sat peering tensely through the sights. The first of the batteries was sliding into view, the men aground staring up curiously, waving jauntily.

His eyes narrowed, his body tensing. His fingers tripped the lever with a metallic snap!

The big bomber heaved violently. A wailing shriek rose for a moment beneath it. There was a thumping crash, a reverberating roar. Simultaneously he heard Cory's guns loose their brittle clatter. He saw one of the Fokkers reel drunkenly. He saw the others scatter like frightened quail, one of them ruddering directly across his path.

His fingers leaped to the Spandau's triggers, clamping tightly. The guns in the Gotha's nose spewed a slashing burst that caught the crossing Fokker full in the cockpit. It spun over on its back and started down.

Almost in the same moment the second of the howitzer batteries stood in the bomb sights. The crews were scurrying for cover, panic-stricken with the mad attack that was being made upon them.

Pendle's fingers rocked the lever back. Another of the heavy bombs screeched downward. The blast it loosed sent a sheet of hot air bulging beneath the Gotha's wings, rocking the heavy ship as though it were a gliding leaf.

As the guttering roar of the explosion welled up into the skies, he pushed forward on the stick and dived for the remaining battery. He rocked the lever to the bombs to loose a hail of destruction through the gut of the ravine. He freed every projectile the ship carried,

washing out the last of the howitzers in a storm of flaming steel and billowing smoke.

He immediately hauled the bomber into a steep, climbing bank to the south. The two surviving Fokkers were buzzing in madly. Cory's guns seemed never silent for an instant, blazing first to one side and then to the other, up and down.

The ensuing race for safety was a blur in Pendle's brain. Fire from the pursuing Fokkers poured into the big ship. And considering the punishment it had been dealt before, it seemed incredible that it could stay a-wing. But it lumbered on with Cory fighting back stubbornly.

NEARING Very, the Archies opened up again. But this time they hurled aloft a cleverly ranged box barrage for the Gotha's protection. They fired at recoil-speed, eventually to blank out the Fokkers and drive them back from their quarry.

Gazing downward Pendle and Cory saw another barrage rolling northward. They saw it lift over the ruck of Very to go slamming down upon the far slopes across which the enemy counter attack had been seeping. And behind this gigantic wave of shell-fire, they glimpsed the long lines of olive drab crowding forward into the contested town, fanning out beyond it.

They landed the purloined bomber on the edge of their drome and climbed down wearily. Major Trask advanced to meet them as they started toward the office. His face was pale and drawn with the suspense of waiting.

Pendle gestured toward the battered Gotha.

"Bombs," he croaked. "It was the only way."

The major nodded thoughtfully.

"I know," he said. "It's all quite impossible. But you did it."

A TRUE STORY of



by

SGT. S. R. H. EVANS

1629 Comox St., Vancouver, B. C.

*A member of the King's Hussars
gives you his supreme thrill in—*

HOLDING THE BRIDGE AT BOIS ROGER

HARDLY recovered from the disastrous battle at Landrecies two days before, the 2nd Brigade of the "Old Contemptibles" crossed the river Aisne at Bois Roger on August 28, 1914. They were a tired, foot-sore and battle-weary contingent of fighting men and it was my duty, with the rest of C Squadron of the 15th "The King's" Hussars, to screen the retreat and prevent the Germans from pressing too closely.

The weary line stretched in straggled formation from Pasy to Cuffies along the road that skirted the high ground near the river.

The bridge we had used in crossing was an old wooden affair that spanned the narrow stream at Bois Roger, a solid structure that seemed to have weathered the beating of relentless time and to have echoed to the tramp of soldier's boots from innumerable campaigns.

At 6:30 the twilight of early fall had not yet set in when Major Pilkington, the squadron leader, sent me down to see if the infantry had all crossed the bridge. As I reined in my horse beside the bridge I could hear the sound of explosions at St. Meddard and Pommers. The great, thudding booms were indeed music to my ears.

Bravery in Action



The hail of leaden death played up and down the bridge timbers. A sudden scream from Sommers; twisting and turning, he fell into the torrent.

As the last one sounded close to the left I knew that the bridge in front of me was the last crossing over which Von Kluck could pursue my retreating comrades. The rest had been blown out. Putting "Old 49" up the hill at a scramble, I reported the infantry all clear.

Slowly the men got into marching order and ready to resume their trek. On the major's orders the squadron moved to the south, leaving two sections under Sergeant Blishon and myself to guard the

bridge-head until the engineers could come up from the rear and dynamite the structure.

Believing the nearest German to be five miles to the east we sent Lapwood, Dwyer and Napper into a narrow, sunken lane with the horses and settled down to enjoy ourselves while waiting for the engineers.

Lighting our cigarettes we listened to the booming of the artillery and exchanged the good-natured banter common to soldiers the world over.

Nearly half an hour passed and nothing happened. Suddenly we were jerked out of our reverie as though someone had set a lighted bomb at our feet.

"Blimey!" gasped Toby Turner, "the Boche!"

Cigarettes were forgotten and we stared aghast. Out of the trees surrounding Pasley came a dozen Germans moving in spread-out formation, headed straight for us.

There had originally been ten of us. The three who had gone with the horses left seven to deal with the Germans. Splitting into two parties, we dropped into the drainage ditches that ran into the river by the bridge.

The Germans came on in an unconcerned fashion. As yet they had not seen us. We watched them come, fingers on triggers, the good old Enfield butt snuggled against our shoulders. Closer and closer they came until only 800, then 700 yards separated us. At 500 yards we let them have it. Five Germans fell to the ground with the first burst. For a moment their companions stood stock still, startled by the unexpected shots. Then, gathering their feet under them, they turned and raced back to a small ditch. Several more Huns were wounded as they flung themselves to earth and I was tempted to laugh at the surprised antics of the ground-hungry Boche.

It took but an instant for the enemy to start pumping lead in our direction and the bridge over our head rattled as the steel slugs bit into the timbers and knocked chips and paint into the water below.

Settling down into our ditch, we realized that we could not be seen by the Germans. Twenty minutes passed. We glanced over the back of our improvised trench but could see no signs of the engineers who were to destroy the bridge.

It settled down to a game of waiting. Which would arrive first: German reinforcements or the engineers? We weren't kept waiting long.

Down the slope from Pasley came a long line of gray-clad figures. There were easily fifty Huns in the group; we were only seven.

We watched the approaching party anxiously. They were still out of range but each step brought them closer and seemed to seal our doom.

SUDDENLY Sommers let out a yell and started to work his bolt like mad. There, less than 200 yards away, was the original party of Germans pouring lead into our ditch from an angle. Bringing all seven pieces to bear on this latest menace, we fired round after round and had the satisfaction of seeing only one or two reach cover.

We had barely time to whirl from that attack when we saw the larger party of Germans advancing in a long-deployed line. Throwing as strong a fire into them as possible, we broke their steady advance. Jerry wanted that bridge badly, and the way those Germans were burning the air around our ears with lead it looked as if he might get it. The left flank advanced with a short rush of twenty-five or thirty yards under the protection of the center and right flanks. Then, as the left flank hit the ground, the center came with a rush to be followed by the right section.

Sweat stood out on my body. It was cold, clammy sweat and the bullets seemed to smack into the bank behind me with a livid curse of hatred. Our deadly marksmanship was telling and the slope was dotted with figures. Some were crawling back, dragging crippled limbs. Others swayed drunkenly and fell to earth only to stagger up and lurch on in their attempt to reach cover.

The main line, however, didn't falter but pressed on with those terrifying, little rushes. They were too close for us to retreat now and if we attempted to cross the bridge or swim we wouldn't have the chance of a rabbit. There was nothing to do but stay, sight, squeeze, re-load and sell our lives as dearly as possible.

Two hundred yards from our ditch the

Germans reached the last bit of available cover. Between us stretched a field that had recently been cut for hay, and on the edge of this they stopped.

The delay was short. We didn't have time to stop firing before a German officer leaped to his feet, waved his sword and ordered a charge. Only a few men in his immediate vicinity made any attempt to support him. The small party led by the gallant officer didn't get fifty yards before they were down and the battle became a sniping duel.

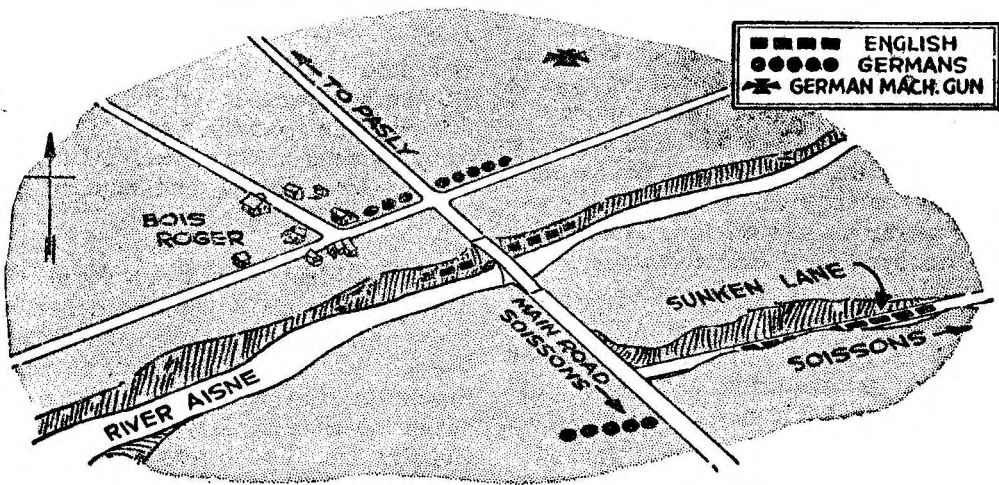
Although 200 yards separated us it seemed that our muzzles were touching as we blazed back and forth at each other.

the eyes. Sergeant Blishon came over from his ditch on the other side of the bridge and collected his identity disk and pay-book.



SUDDENLY there was a slithering sound behind us. Whirling about, I brought my gun to shoulder, fully expecting to see a scouting party of Huns. Instead, there stood two engineers, dirty and grimy from a long crawl along the river's edge to reach us,

Two engineers have never looked so good to me before or after, and we were



Suddenly we noticed a movement among the Germans. We feared another attack and settled more firmly into our improvised firing pits; but the German line broke and they ran for the ditch at their rear. Seven men had turned sixty and we felt like shouting aloud as we pumped lead into the fleeing, zig-zagging figures. If they had rushed us with the same broken formation we would have certainly died in our ditch.

Turning away I wiped the sweat and grime from my face and noticed that Turner was slumped in the bottom of the ditch. Turning him over on his back I discovered that he had been hit between

overjoyed to discover that they had brought along two big slabs of gun-cotton with which to blow up the bridge.

We had hardly congratulated the sappers when a rattle of rifle fire behind us caused every man to hug the bank of the ditch.

My first fears were realized. A party of about twenty Germans had swum the river and had worked in at our rear. At the first volley, Frost went down with half a dozen bullets in him and Regan got a slug in the chest and one in the shoulder. He died in less than five minutes. Ben Read got one in the left side and was hard hit. It was with great difficulty that Ser-

geant Blishon got a bandage on him.

As though we were controlled by a common mind, the entire defending force left the ditch and took protection under the bridge proper and out of direct range of both bodies of attacking Germans.

The larger body of Germans had crept up to the edge of the hay field again. We were indeed in a pretty pickle and the only way out seemed straight up. Thinking of possible reserves my mind shifted to the three men whom we had left with the horses. Could they help?

Even as I wondered there was the sound of two rifles barking to our left and I realized that it was our buddies and that they were enfilading the smaller party which had attacked us.

It was rapidly becoming dark and the two sappers retreated across the river to place their gun-cotton. Ammunition had grown scarce. Even with that from the casualties we were only able to raise eleven rounds each. Calling to the two engineers, we secured their ammunition—two bandoliers—and felt more secure although we stood no chance of standing off a strong charge.

To put the cork in the bottle a German machine gun opened up over at our right and we couldn't locate it, but by laying low were able to keep out of its arc.

Closer and closer crept the darkness although we could still distinguish objects at a hundred yards. Would the engineers never get that gun-cotton in place! It seemed hours since they had gone back.

Then like a message of deliverance came the whispered information that the bridge was mined and that we could retreat. Off to our right was an occasional flash as the horse-tenders held off the Germans who had attacked from the rear.

How were we to get over that bridge? If we walked over or even crept, we would be outlined against the sky and chewed to bits by the machine gun. There was only one other alternative. We would have to go over the bridge hand-over-hand fashion, suspended from the planking.

Sergeant Blishon was the first to go.

Putting his rifle across his back he had a look at the casualties and we suddenly realized that Ben Read had been quiet for some time. He was dead.

Hand over hand we went. First Blishon, then Sommers and myself. There was a burst of machine-gun fire, a splash and a startled yell all at once. Someone had been picked off as he hung by his hands.

Machine gun bullets beat a lively tattoo directly over my head and seemed to search back and forth over the bridge timbers like some ghastly hand of death. My muscles stiffened and it seemed that I had the strength of ten men as I swung my way in that dizzy, hand-over-hand race with death. With a sigh of relief I dropped into the shallow water and waded to shore. The two sappers and Blishon had Sommers on the bank after dragging him from the river. He wasn't badly wounded. One steel-jacket had scraped his left ribs and another had nicked his left arm.

NIGHT had almost enveloped the landscape as the sappers lit the long fuses with a sputtering cigarette lighter. We shielded the flame as well as we could. Surely the Hun would see the flame and sweep the river bank with machine gun and rifle fire. The fuse was stiff and at first resisted all efforts to get it lighted; but finally it caught with a little hiss of burning powder and we raced for the horses. The fuse was cut long enough to give us a start, but it seemed hours before we reached our mounts.

Finally the horse-tenders challenged us and we told them everything was all set. Napper had been hit by a ricochet and was about all in but we heaved him into his saddle and Dwyer and Sommers mounted one on each side of him on their own horses to give a helping hand. The two sappers picked two horses and Blishon and myself took our own. We decided to drive the other three horses before us. Scraping nervous rowels on our horses' flanks we started cautiously down the road.

Suddenly the gun-cotton exploded with a reverberating roar and the whole countryside was illuminated. The bridge collapsed with a grinding, wrenching medley of sound and our horses flashed into a dead gallop down the narrow road, preceded by the three riderless mounts.

As we tore through the night and drew our swords we could hear the surprised shouting of the Germans on the other bank. They had no idea that we had planned on blowing up the bridge. Lying close to our horses' necks we sped down that old road with no regard for chuck holes or bushwhackers.

Straight ahead we sped, the heavy hoofs of our mounts beating a reckless tattoo on the flinty road. I, for one, was shaking like a sapling in the wind from the nervous strain of that last two hours.

There was a shout in front. A half dozen spurts of red flame cut the darkness and I tried to glue myself to the back of "Old 49". The loose horses in front swerved and crashed into something with dull thuds and whinnies of terror. Lapwood, Blishon and myself bounced into a crowd of Germans that filled the road from side to side.

The loose horses broke through first and I felt the point of my sword sink into something like a feather pillow and fetch up against a hard object with a jolt that

nearly broke my wrist. Someone dropped under my horse's hoofs with a strangled cry. A blow on my right thigh nearly knocked me from the saddle and all feeling went out of it. I felt of that leg to see if my foot was still in the stirrup.

A terrible sickness gripped my stomach and I thought I was going to vomit but my stomach was too empty. We rode like demons until our laboring horses started to weaken and then we called a halt.

Napper was still with us but how he got through was a mystery. Dwyer got it in the shoulder, Blishon in the side and I had a large gaping hole in my thigh where a bullet had torn the flesh on its passage through my leg. One of the sappers had a slight scalp wound and complained of a headache. The other had a bad body wound. Lapwood was the only one not wounded!

After bandaging up each other's wounds as well as possible we struck off across country but the condition of our horses, each of which had two or three bullet wounds, kept the pace very slow.

At 1:30 A. M. on August 29th we reported to the commander of the Black Watch at Cravancon. We had accomplished our job, the bridge had been blown up at the expense of half our detail, and each man had accounted for at least five Germans in the defense of the bridgehead.

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By ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

Begin now—and finish—this novel by the man who wrote "Over The Top". A detailed synopsis makes this a complete story.



"Give 'em everything," shouted O'Leary above the din. Holding his right wrist in clutching fingers the battle-mad Irishman swept his stuttering automatic back and forth.

meant the death of an ordinary man, O'Leary came through unscathed and with new medals for his heavily decorated tunic.

Taking two youngsters, Jack and Bill, under his protective wing, O'Leary promises their mothers by letter that he will bring them through the war safely. Two sallies into No-man's land with the youngsters, with death leering at them from every angle, and it looked like only a question of time until they would be killed despite all he could do.

After a bit of particularly good heroics, O'Leary is sent with five other doughs to investigate the town of Sergy and locate a tunnel supposed to be undermining the city. The Germans hold the town and O'Leary and his pals find themselves trapped on a roof with Krauts all around them.

O'Leary looked over what was left of the coping. A German lieutenant standing in front of an infantry platoon, hands cupped to mouth, was looking up at the roof where the Americans were plainly revealed.

"On the roof there!" sounded a voice in English from the street, a voice strongly tinged with German accent. "Come down and surrender or we'll bomb you out."

"Know any more jokes?" shouted down

O'Leary. "That last one wasn't so good."

Go on from here.

PART IV

WHAT was that you said? I couldn't hear you?"

O'Leary thought quickly before replying. His tired eyes lighted as a scheme of escape flashed through his mind. It was a desperate chance at the best, but still a chance.

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minits to talk it over with the colonel. He's in command. The saints fergive the first lie what ever passed me lips," he muttered to himself, then louder, "Two minits is all I want."

"Your *colonel*?" There was triumph in the German officer's question. Capturing an American colonel would be a feather in his hat. "What is your colonel's name?"

"Colonel Terrence X. O'Leary, sir, actin' brigade commander."

"Speak with him then, but no longer than two minutes by my watch, otherwise I shall bomb you."

"Very well, Yer Honorable Excellency." O'Leary turned to his comrades. "Git two bombs each, and *quick*. Pull the pins, and on signal from me toss 'em over at this spot." He touched the coping with a foot. "They's right below it. When the eggs bust, don't wait a second, but drop by yer hands to that bit o' floorin' below, then slide down to the first floor and into the cellar. If the passage ain't clogged up, duck into it and wait fer me. Jack and Bill, ye go first, then Mike, and then me. On the ground floor, Mike, me and ye'll hiss 'em with some more billydoos. Understand, everybody?" Quick nods in the affirmative. "Git ready now and watch fer me signal. To make it accordin' to Hoyle, I'll give the boloney fair warnin' of me intentions when the truce is up."

O'Leary glanced at his watch, almost a half minute of time left.

"Don't move until time's up," he cautioned, "then work *fast*. I ain't gonna give the Krauts a alibi that I won the war crooked. Remimber now, them what throws first will have the situation well in hand, like the lousy gyrenes."

"Ye're a square shooter, Big Shot," said Mike, in admiration. "No wonder ye always wins."

"'Tis me what knows it, Flaherty. On yer marks now." He looked at his watch and bent over the coping. "Shure, and Colonel Terrence X. O'Leary," he called down, "presints his compliments to Loo-tinint Limburger and instructs him to go to hell, with permission to fire when ready."

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"You insolent pig!" A sharp command in German. "I'll have mercy on none of—"

"Is that nice?" O'Leary signaled with a hand to those on the roof. "How do ye want 'em—*scrambled*?"

Six Mills bombs shot downward, followed by two from O'Leary.

Jack swung himself from the roof with, Bill right after him. *Berammpp!* *Crummpp!* Eight terrific explosions in rapid succession. Without looking to see the result of the bombing, Mike dropped to the splintered flooring. O'Leary almost landed on top of him. Jack and Bill had negotiated the mass of debris and were now on the first floor. From there they ducked into the cellar.

Gaining the ground floor, Mike and O'Leary threw two more bombs into the demoralized German platoon and joined Jack and Bill below.

They found the entrance to the passage clear, its heavy trap door held up by Private Jones, whom Corporal Watkins had left on watch. The doughboy was covered with dust and his face was cut and scratched.

"A helluva job to give a guy!" he threw at O'Leary. "I been killed fifty times already."

"Ye was dead before ye jined the army! Into the hole, Jack and Bill! Then ye, Admiral Paul Jones. Wiggle yer fannie, Flaherty!"

All obeyed except Mike, who wheeled upon O'Leary.

"And ye, Big Shot?" he demanded, anxiously.

"Into yer hole, I said, County Cork! Down ye go! I'll foller right after ye. I got a scheme to figger out. Me orders is fer ye guys to work along the passage as far as ye kin go. Don't fergit now, 'cause it's *important*."

It meant the lives of all to delay, so Mike jumped down into the underground tunnel with the rest. The trap door almost hit him on the head, slammed shut by O'Leary, who remained above in the cellar.

"I knowed it! I jest knowed it!" howled Mike. "What ye do that fer, Big

Shot? Ain't it jest like him?" he groaned. "Givin' of his life to save bums like us." "Why—why didn't he come?" choked Jack, clutching Mike's arm in the darkness. "Let's—go—go back with him."

"Go back? No such chancet! Hear that noise on the trap door? He's coverin' it with bricks and stones, so's to hide it from the Krauts. Tryin' to save us!"

"Sergeant O'Leary said to push forward as far as we could," put in Bill, tensely. "We must do as he says. It's only fair to him. I haven't lost faith in him," he added, half accusingly.

"Bill's right." Jack's voice steadied. "Standing here idle, we are betraying him."

"Be gob, ye're right, kids! 'Tis me what should know better. Okay, Big Shot," said Mike, mouth raised to the trap door. "We'll push into Berlin and, the saints be praised, we'll find ye there ahead of us, with the Kaiser on a dog chain."

"This the Hague Conference?" gruffly demanded Jones. "Or jest one of them patriotic meetin's? A lot of gas, but no action."

Hearts heavy, their own danger forgotten in their anxiety for O'Leary, they cautiously groped their way through the dark passage. Above them they could hear a hollow, reverberating roar that echoed and re-echoed along the subterranean tunnel. The Germans were bombing the roof, correctly surmised Mike, with a sharp intake of breath.

IN THE meantime, O'Leary was busier than a gang of Scotchmen working on piece-work. Disregarding the blasts above, from the piles around him he gathered bricks, stones, splintered wood, anything that came to hand, until the trap door was covered. Never before had he labored harder and to better effect. His job finished to his taste, with automatic loose in holster and a bomb in his hand, he tip-toed up the broken cellar steps and glanced into the street.

The German platoon, except for its dead and wounded close to the house, had retired to a position across the street

and was hurling potato-mashers into the air, most of which went over and beyond the section of roof, to burst in the rear of the house.

Unseen, the Irishman reached the back door. A yell went up and a steel-jacket clipped the air close to his head. Crying out in defiance, he threw a bomb squarely into the German midst and, drawing his pistol, darted into the back yard. They were after him like hounds running a fox.

"Do yer dooty, brogans!" sang O'Leary. "Cover ground, 'cause him what runs away lives to fight another day, or night."

Two rifle bullets kicked up dust under his feet and he sprang into the air as though prodded with a red hot iron. Nimbly as a jungle cat he landed on a heap of fallen bricks, then leaped over the manure pile which had previously saved him and headed for the ruined cow shed close by. Down he ducked behind this cover and shot the foremost German emerging from the house he had quitted. Then the chase was on in earnest.

Into and through the adjoining courtyard raced O'Leary and turned into a house which had escaped the heavy shelling. Here, through a window, he emptied his automatic, knocking over a German, then slipped in a fresh clip. But he had no intention of making a stand in the house.

In the company P. C. he had studied the course of the underground passage as marked on the map of Sergy by Corporal Strassberger until it had become indelibly imprinted on his memory. His objective was a red brick house back of the main street about a block farther on, where there was an entrance to the tunnel, unless Strassberger had lied.

But between him and that house lay grave obstacles in the shape of ruins it would be necessary to climb over and thus expose himself to his pursuers. The odds were greatly against him, but he had played long shots before and had cashed at the pay window.

Out of a side window he jumped, shot

into the open, and reached a protecting heap as several steel-jackets cracked over him.

Crouching behind the heap he sized up the situation from a more advantageous angle. To his joy he found that the heaps of ruins were really his salvation, it being possible to hide himself by running low among them, and without clambering over them as he had thought. Off he started, the Germans on his trail, firing pot shots at his head as it occasionally bobbed up into sight.

A shell screamed over from the American lines and knocked a hole in a house in the next street. Then another shell coughed and plowed into a pile of wreckage.

O'Leary smiled grimly as he crouched in cover. The Rainbows were taking their whack at Sergy again. He risked a peep at his pursuers. They had stopped and stood in a group, talking anxiously.

Ber-ammp! The Germans were showered with flying plaster from a ruined wall near them. This decided them. They turned tail and raced for the nearest cellar.

Temporarily O'Leary was safe from pursuit, but between the two, he preferred the Germans. Dodging Yankee tinware was not to his liking. However, regardless of the bombardment, he must reach his objective, if he expected to rejoin those in the tunnel.

He ran to a crater made by a recent shell-burst and tumbled into it, waiting. Seldom did two shells strike in the same place. There was a way of cheating a bombardment. Another wait and he duplicated the maneuver, each sortie bringing him nearer to the red brick house.

The shelling rapidly increased in intensity, until O'Leary's robust optimism gave way to grave doubts for his safety. About one hundred and fifty yards of rough going separated him from his goal. Setting his jaws, he started another of his dashes, but the American wagon soldiers double-crossed him, for two shells *did* strike in the same place.

Vrunngg! O'Leary was knocked over

like a ten-pin, a column of earth burying him as it broke. His lights went out and he lay face upward, an arm shielding his mouth and nose.

In the underground passage, Mike struggled forward, panting like a winded animal. The others floundered at his heels, breathing hard. The air had grown so heavy and oppressive that respiration had become difficult.

"Mike—Mike," gasped Bill, reeling against an earthen wall, "I—I—can't go—on."

"Stick it, chum," implored Jack, fighting valiantly against the dizziness gripping him. "Don't give—in—now."

Private Jones collapsed, emitting a hissing groan. Bill stumbled over him, fell, and was unable to rise. This blocked Jack's path, and he too sank down, his legs refusing to function. Mike turned about and groped with his hands until he touched the huddled forms.

"Ye yeller bums," he choked out. "Leavin' the—Big Shot—in a—jam like this. Shure—and he's expictin' us—to meet him."

But it was no use. They were beyond being goaded into further action, even by the Irishman's scathing denunciation. Mike, although his strength waned fast and his brain swam, desperately battled for their lives, as well as his own. An outlet must be found, and quickly.

In a sudden paroxysm of terror at the dreadful fate awaiting them, with closed fists he pounded the earthen walls until his knuckles spurted blood. On his dulling ears resounded the drumming of the bombardment. With one last effort he lurched forward, striking out with both fists, but encountered only space. Down he went.

But Mike wasn't licked. A final swing and his fist hit wood, giving out a hollow sound as though it were a thin partition. This revived him somewhat and he pounded fiercely, crying out the while.

There came a rush of cool, invigorating air and he sucked great gulps into his bursting lungs. Daylight suddenly blinded him. He sat up, eyes closed to shut out the glare. Behind him he heard the

fallen men stirring restlessly. Reason flooded back to him, and he opened his eyes.



STANDING over him was a German sergeant, holding a Luger to his heart. And behind the sergeant stood several other Germans, looking through an opened door, their bayonets at the ready.

"Amerikaner," announced the sergeant to those in rear of him. "*Hande hoch!*" Mike felt the muzzle of the pistol prod his chest. Up went his arms. "How many iss dere by you?" demanded the German. "Und vas iss?"

"Three more," replied Mike, sullenly, realizing that resistance was useless. "Put away yer pop-gun, we surrender. Stick up yer meat-hooks, fellers," he advised to the others. "Berlin's our nixt summer home."

The four Rainbows, upon a motion from the sergeant, climbed unsteadily to their feet and entered a cellar. They blinked in the light coming from a back entrance. The sergeant lined them against a wall and his men relieved them of their arms. This done, the prisoners were ordered to sit in a corner, two privates standing guard over them. Outside, the bombardment was still in progress.

"The end of a perfectly awful day," remarked Mike, as he gazed sheepishly at the others. "Let's take a vote on it."

"You're unanimously elected," growled Private Jones, resentfully. "I ain't never seen it to fail, in the war and out, every time I mix with a lousy Irishman I get pinched. Now, back in New York, at a ball of the 69th Regiment—"

"Aw, nuts!" Mike squeezed his nose between two fingers. "It's that high falutin', high society name of yers what's hard luck. Ye oughta hang out with the Smiths and Browns and leave the common Irish alone. Now if ye had a monicker like Flaherty ye'd—"

"How can you sit there and talk that way," asked Jack, indignantly, "when

O'Leary might be dead, or perhaps worse, lying out there wounded in the shelling?"

"Don't think I've fergot him, kid, but sometimes ye gotta fun a bit, or go bugs. Me heart's tore with anxiousness."

"You shouldt keep quiet yet," ordered the German sergeant, "und behave like goodt prisoners, or mit mine bayonet I your eyes poke outd."

"Ye and what regimint?" snapped Mike.

"Me und der 4th Guards yet," replied the sergeant, seriously. "Don't speak idt more!"

Mike lapsed into silence but shot the Kraut a nasty look, which was returned with compound interest. They sat making hideous faces at each other. Suddenly Mike stiffened and stared out of the cellar door. The top of a doughboy tin hat was rising warily from behind a pile of bricks in the backyard. Could it be O'Leary? Joy flashed over him, then quickly subsided. O'Leary had lost his helmet in the charge against Sergy, knocked off by a rifle bullet.

"Did O'Leary have a tin hat on when he was on the roof?" he whispered to Bill, a wary eye on the sergeant.

"Yes. I'm sure he did. Took Corporal Watkins', I think. Why?"

"Nothin', I jest wanted to know."

Mike flashed another look at the brick pile while he pretended to adjust his puttee. Up came the tin hat again, then a face that made him tingle all over. It was O'Leary.

Covertly watching Mike, the German sergeant followed the Irishman's gaze and also saw the American helmet. He whispered something to his men and then started humming a tune to deceive Mike.

O'Leary, unable to see clearly down into the cellar on account of its semi-darkness, raised a little higher until his view was unobstructed by the top of the cellar steps. It was his objective, that cellar, but he wished to reconnoiter it first. Under the concentration of his gaze, objects in the cellar began to take distinct shape.

He started, then stared harder. Framed in the door, but back against the wall, he

could distinguish the face of Flaherty. He rubbed his eyes. Yes, it was the Mick. He couldn't mistake that ugly mug. And he seemed to be alone, and quite at ease.

"The lousy bum," muttered O'Leary. "Settin' on his fanny, and me out here duckin' kitchen confetti."

O'Leary raised his right hand to his face and moved it back and forth, a signal he and Mike understood, which asked if everything were all right. The answer in the negative was a hand brought very slowly to the forehead.

Mike got O'Leary's sign and raised his hand to warn him to keep away, but glancing at the German sergeant, he looked into the muzzle of a Luger. His hand stopped half way and he rubbed his nose in an effort to disguise his act.

"Thumbin' his nose at me, huh?" O'Leary grinned. "Everythin' must be jake. Now fer a spectacular intrance of the conquerin' hero."

He ran to the cellar door, jumped down the steps and, with hand in blouse assumed a Napoleonic attitude, unable to see around him due to the darkness.

"Strike up the band!" he cried. "Here comes a sailor!"

"And how!" groaned Mike. "Right off a whaler!"

"Greetin's, me brave Rainbows! Never be it said that— What the hell!" gasped O'Leary.

A circle of German bayonets had suddenly surrounded him and a Luger tickled his ribs.

"You belong by der navy yet?" asked the sergeant. "A sailor? Yah?"

"No, but I'm gonna jine the navy," rasped O'Leary, as he reached for the ceiling. "With nit-wits by the name o' Flaherty in the lousy army. it's time I went to sea."

Jack, Bill and Jones were too dumbfounded by the sudden apparition to do else but stare, jaws hanging. Mike gulped and swallowed hard twice before he could find words.

"All the lunatics ain't dead yit!" he exploded. "Fools rush in where angels is afear'd to—"

"Sez ye!" O'Leary was backed against the wall and disarmed. "Shure, and 'tis part of me scheme, what I done. Yer brain is too slow to grasp it, Privit Flaherty, of County Cork, where all the thick ones comes from." Ordered to do so, O'Leary sat down with the prisoners. "Well, if it ain't me old college chumps, Jack and Bill! Howdy, pals. And Admiral John Paul Jones, of the good ship, Hard Luck! Quite a family reunion, and some nice little Krauts, too, who I'll soon take prisoner. How's the folks at home, Sargint Boloney?"

"Sergeant Heinrich Gottlieber," snarled the German, "not Boloney. Der folks iss never mind, und shut oop."

"Pardon me, Sarge, my mistake. I jest dropped in, social-like, to inquire about the Kaiser's health. His bum arm gittin' better?"

A significant move of the Luger and O'Leary saluted sarcastically, but diplomatically discontinued his discourse. The other prisoners sat in silence. And a cogent reason too, because the sergeant, enraged over O'Leary's disrespectful allusion to the Kaiser's infirmity, which was *verboten* in the German army, stood over them threateningly with finger on trigger.

It was a sheer impossibility, however, for O'Leary to remain mute overlong. About five minutes passed and he tuned in again.

"I bet ye don't believe this is part o' me clever scheme," he said. "On the level now, I see doubt in yer smilin' Irish eyes, Mike. And when Irish eyes is smilin'—eyes like yers—there's somethin' rotten in Sweden."

"I told ye yer lousy luck couldn't last, and now the blow is fell. If the Krauts is starvin', what'n hell ye think they feeds their prisoners on?"

"Oh yeah?" O'Leary looked at his watch. "'Bout time me luck was changin'," he kidded. "Five minits more, and then—"

The sergeant angrily shut him up. Outside, the shelling seemed to be diminishing, because no shells were bursting near the house, having moved deeper into the village.

"As I was sayin'," ventured O'Leary again, "me luck is due to—"

MIKE'S jaw dropped. Shadows darted by the cellar window and the entrance suddenly flooded with Rainbows and flashing bayonets. The Germans grabbed for the ceiling as though it were a lunch counter.

"Me luck's right on schedule," grinned O'Leary. "Whadda ye think of me scheme now, Privit Michael J. Flaherty, o' County Cork?"

"Ye—ye lucky stiff!" blurted Mike. "I'm *sunk!*"

"And now, Sargint *Boloney*," said O'Leary to the frightened sergeant, "how's the folks at home?"

"Mighty damn seekk," replied the German, humbly. "Und der Kaiser's arm iss seekk, too," he added, quickly.

"What'n hell's all the gabbin' about?" demanded a corporal in charge of the rescuers. "What you blokes doin' here?"

"Ye see, Corp'ral," retorted O'Leary, "I captured Sergy all by me lonesome, but ye took so long showin' up I gave it back to the Krauts. Ye kin have it now, with the compliments of Sargint Terrence X. O'Leary."

"So you're Sergeant O'Leary, are you?" The corporal scanned O'Leary with interest. "I've heard of you."

"So's the Kaiser, me buddin' young non-com."

"Yeah, it's *you* ah right. Ain't no mistake about it now."

Several more times that day Sergy changed hands, but finally was permanently held by the Rainbows. The bravery of the 42nd Division elicited the compliments of the commander of the French corps, who said in part:

"Your excellent work enabled the French division on your right to advance, and France is deeply grateful to you."

General Menoher, commanding the Rainbow Division, in his day's report to Headquarters included the words:

"The command is in good condition and, having consolidated its lines, is preparing to advance again as soon as orders are received." Which was typical of the

Rainbow Division, from its commanding general down to its lowliest private—always ready to fight.

In spite of fearful machine gun fire, the 42nd was moving forward again on August 1st, but its advance was stopped in line of Mareuil-Endole Coulanges by machine guns, its opposing force being identified as the famous 1st Guard Division.

However, this was not for long, because the 117th Engineers, acting as infantry, pushed over Hill 212. Then, after a most desperate resistance by enemy infantry and artillery, Bois de la Pissotte, the Foret de Nesles, and Mareuil-Endole-les Bonhommes Ferme were successfully passed. At dawn of August 3rd, the 117th Engineers occupied Chery-Chartreuve.

After this unbroken spell of terrific fighting the Rainbow Division obtained a well-earned rest for a short period. But on September 12th, the division and its replacements were called upon for forced night marches to aid in the great effort that was to bring about the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient.

It is in the 42nd Division official report that:

"The 42nd took every objective in accordance with the plan of the Army Commander. They advanced fourteen kilometers in twenty-eight hours, and forward elements pushed five kilometers farther, or nineteen kilometers beyond their original starting point. They took more than 1,000 prisoners from nine army divisions; seven villages and forty-two square kilometers of enemy territory were captured by the division, and large supplies of food, clothing, ammunition, guns and engineering material were seized."

Then before the middle of October the Rainbows were called upon to take a prominent part in the Meuse-Argonne offensive.

Although the division started active aggression on the Meuse-Argonne front west of Montfaucon and its advance was phenomenal, A Company by the fortunes of war, except for several minor con-

tacts with the enemy, had it comparatively easy until early in the second week of November.

The outfit occupied a small ravine in the Argonne woods. Sergeant O'Leary sat with Private Flaherty on the bank of the ravine watching Jack and Bill. Jack was helping Bill sew on the corporal's chevrons which he had acquired that morning. Jack already had worn the stripes for nearly a week. O'Leary grinned, nudged Flaherty and pointed.

"Look at 'em," he said, proudly. "A few months ago they was a coupla wet-nosed kids what didn't know their ankle from their elbow. Pipe 'em, will ye? *Corp'ral's*, if ye please! And who done it all, I ask ye?"

"Why ask *me*?" snorted Mike, good-naturedly, pride and affection for the two youngsters written all over him. "If I told ye the truth, ye'd only call me a bloody liar."

"Go on tell the truth," challenged O'Leary. "Shure, and it'd be the first time fer ye. Who made 'em soldiers?"

"Who else but our World war hero?" put in Private Jones. "The great Terrence X. O'Leary himself."

"Right ye be, Rear-Admiral John Paul Jones—but mostly *rear*. But as big and great as I am, 'twould take a better man than me to make a soldier out of a Jones. Shure, and yer whole family boiled down wouldn't make the button off a soldier's teddies, me Admiral of the Rear."

"You oughta been a bugler, O'Leary. You wouldn't of needed a horn."

Jones ducked a clod of earth that whizzed by his nose.

"Ye deserve a lot o' credit, Big Shot," said Mike, "but ye don't git none from me. If ye ask me, them kids was *born* soldiers. The way they done their stuff 'round St. Mihiel wasn't nobody's business."

"There's somethin' to that, Mr. Flaherty. Soldierin' sorta runs in the blood; but listen at this and judge fer yerself." O'Leary got out a dog-eared letter from a pocket, and read aloud from a part of it "—'And every night, both Mrs. Wil-

liams and I pray fer ye, Sargint O'Leary, pray that God will watch over and perfect and bring ye safely home. It is wonderful solace to two anxious mothers' hearts to know that such a splendid man as ye is carin' fer their sons in those awful battles'." O'Leary, his voice gone husky, paused and smiled at Mike, who cleared his throat, started to speak, but nodded instead. "But that ain't all I'm gittin' at, Privit Flaherty, o' County Cork. Listen at this." Again he read from the letter. "—'And if it is God's will that our boys must give their lives fer their country, we say, God's will be done'." Reverently O'Leary put the letter back into its envelope. "That's why they is soldiers, Mike," he said. "They jest can't help bein', with mothers like them."

"Ain't it the truth?" sighed Private Jones. "No wonder America can't be licked!"

"Ye know, Big Shot," said Mike, "them kids is goin' back to their mamas if we gotta leave our bones rottin' in France to do it."

"The first sensible words ye've spouted to date, Privit Michael J. Flaherty, o' County Cork. Shut up now, here they come. Don't they look *grand*?"

JACK, grown used to his stripes, pulled the bashful and red-faced Bill along by the arm.

"Bill thinks they ought to be an inch lower, pal," he said to O'Leary, "but I say no. Four inches above the elbow, isn't it?"

"We-ell," hesitated O'Leary, closing one eye and squinting critically at the chevron, "it's kinda hard to say. They looks jest perfect where they is. Some elbows is bigger'n others and some is littler. Sorta restin' in the center of the black, I think, *Corp'ral* Williams."

"If you say so—it must be right, pal," stammered Bill, fidgeting awkwardly. "But I'd sure like to have them regulation, you know. First time for me."

"Spoke like a vet'ran, Bill. Yeah, they'll do. Know yer gin'ral orders, *Corp'ral*?"



"You bet!" exclaimed Bill, enthusiastically. "My general orders are: To take charge of this post and all government—"

"Shure, and I'll take yer word fer the rest," interrupted O'Leary, hastily. "And ye're assigned to me section too. *Fine!* Yer first dooty'll be to put Private Flaherty in his proper place and learn him not to git so familiar with us non-coms. Ye see, Bill, we's the backbone of the army, or the Blue Book's a lousy liar."

"So the happy family's warring again!" All turned. First Sergeant Duffy stood smiling down at them. "Sergeant O'Leary, the company moves forward sometime tonight, leap-frogging everything in front until it makes contact with the Krauts, so there's a special favor I want to ask of you."

"If it ain't kissin' ye on both cheeks the favor's already done."

"Missed by a mile, O'Leary! During the St. Mihiel operation you made me change my morning report five times. Now, for cripes sakes, in the Argonne here have a heart, won't you? If you're missing, stay missing, if you get killed, stay killed. That's all I ask of you. Just be *consistent*."

"Yeah, the lucky stiff," said Mike. He took off his tin hat. "Lookit me hair, will ye? Silver threads among the gold. And it all come from playin' Little Boy Blue with him in that raid on Haumont. This big lock o' silver threads was concocted with him swimmin' the Madine River."

"Wait'll I go into *action*," grinned O'Leary. "Ye'll look like a bald-headed snow man."

"Gees, we gotta hike tonight, Sarge?" grumbled Jones. "Me dogs is killin' me."

"On the level, fellows." Duffy's voice became strangely grave and ominous. "There's a big party on for us, I'm sure. The Old Man looks worried as hell, and you all know what that portends. He calls us his boys and thinks he's responsible for each one of us. Yes, there'll be big and bloody doings before long. Remember what I said about that morning report, O'Leary. Be *consistent*."

Sergeant Duffy walked slowly down the line rubbing his chin in deep thought.

"First time I ever seen him look so gloomy," remarked O'Leary. "He's worried sick about somethin'."

"At mess I heard him tell Sergeant Ashton he had a presentiment of evil," informed Jack, solemnly. "And not long after I saw him writing a letter home."

"Begorra, that's a thought!" ejaculated O'Leary. "Ye two corp'rals writ home yit? Today's the day."

"I—I'll write tomorrow, Sergeant," said Bill.

"How about ye, Jack?"

"Bill and I will both write tomorrow night."

"Sez ye! Break out yer stationery and git busy *now*. Sometimes tomorrow don't show up in a war. Hop to it!"

Before they turned in for the night O'Leary personally delivered two letters in their handwriting to the company P. C. to be sent back with the other mail. And he also dropped two of his own into the ammo tin used for a mail box.

AT MIDNIGHT the company was aroused and the march forward began. And what a march it was, stumbling through the darkness, tripping over vines, scratched by thorns, cursed for their clumsiness by the outfits they leap-frogged, running into trees and falling into holes. And all the time the sounds of fighting growing louder and louder and fiercer. Even the blankets of night hadn't quieted the action that had been in progress for seventy-two hours without cessation.

Gaunt, shattered trees were silhouetted against the red bursts of shells like horrible, up-reaching dead hands, causing cold shivers to run down the spines of the advancing doughboys. Machine guns, American and German, yammered and pounded and beat their tattoos, echoing and re-echoing throughout the ghostly, war-scarred timber. Now and then rifles barked and cracked and a bomb coughed.

High on the sky line thin streaks of red curved up, breaking into blobs of ghostly, incandescent radiance that frosted the **burned** and blackened tree trunks on one side. Leaves, where there were leaves,

fluttered down, to the accompaniment either of a sharp crack or a moaning whine as a ricco winged to the rear. And above it all was the weird *swish, swish* of passing shells.

Once a rotary band on a heavy caliber came loose and emitted its deathly, piercing scream. Jones caught O'Leary by the arm.

"Wha—what's that?" he gasped.

"A flyin' cat," growled the Irishman, none too comfortable himself. "Lookin' fer a mouse."

"Guess it didn't see you then," snapped Jones.

"Keep in touch with the man on each side of you," was passed down the long line. "Infantry ahead. No noise."

About fifty yards farther and the advancing company stumbled upon a line of dug-in soldiers. A temporary halt was called.

"What outfit?" rasped a dough on the ground. "We been waitin' all night fer you."

"Marines," answered O'Leary. "Ye kin go home now, we'll take charge of the situation."

"Cripes, but you're funny! Talk like a john outfit, feller. You're one of them fresh replacements, I bet, what ain't seen no fightin'. Well, you'll get your belly full before long. Krauts ain't more'n two hundred yards in front. Laugh that off!"

"They ain't makin' much noise, Gin'ral Pershin'," said Flaherty. "How come?"

"Just drawin' their breaths. They'll tune up again pretty soon."

"Shut up that damned chin-music," commanded an authoritative voice from out the darkness.

"Oh yeah?" retorted Flaherty. "And who the hell are ye?"

"My name is Donnelly. What's yours?"

"Phew!" Mike gulped. "The saints save me. Wild Bill himself!"

The line moved forward about thirty yards, halted, laid down and was ordered to dig in.

"What'n hell's a colonel doin' on the firin' line?" asked a replacement of O'Leary, as he plied his spade. "That was Lieutenant-Colonel Donnelly, wasn't it?"

"Nobody else but, me bye. Wild Bill believes in *leadin'* his men, not runnin' a battle over the long distance telephone. He's *Irish*, ye see, like me. He's got it all figured out. Not long back headquarters calls him down fer exposin' hisself, and this is what he hands them as a alibi: 'If me men sees a colonel *ahead* of them, they figures they oughta be a mile in front of him, so jest natchrally pushes on.' Me and Wild Bill is college chumps feller."

Hearing the digging so close to them, the Germans opened with rifle and machine gun fire. Did those entrenching shovels agitate? A forty-niner digging for nuggets never made the dirt fly faster. Those doughs just melted into the ground. Pretty soon the Germans packed up. Tomorrow was another day and sleep meant more to them just then than winning the war.



A HEAVY, cold mist settled down, eating into the marrows of the entrenched Americans. Teeth chattered and fingers numbed as they hugged the wet ground. But even misery can't last forever and gray, cold streaks in the east heralded the approach of dawn. And with the dawn the mist began to clear, revealing to the doughboys their position.

They had dug in on a gentle slope. About two hundred yards to the front was open space, dotted with clumps of brush. This space rose gradually and ended at the edge of a thick wood covering a large hill.

"Keep yer heads down," warned O'Leary to Jack and Bill, who, with the curiosity of youth had raised up to see what lay before them. "When the fog lifts they'll start house-cleanin'."

"But you are *kneeling*, Sergeant," protested Jack. "They'll hit you too."

"Shure, and it's the place of a non-com to keep hisself posted on the war."

"I also am a non-com."

"A corp'ral ain't a non-com, he's jest a stirred-up privit. Lay down, or I'll step on ye."

A new lieutenant named Travers, no bigger than a large-sized peanut, who had come up with other replacements after the St. Mihiel drive, raised from a shell hole near O'Leary.

"Don't you ever stop gassing, Sergeant?" he asked, sharply. "You weary me to the point of exhaustion."

"Guess not, sir. Sorta habit o' mine. I'm sorry if I annoy the lootinint, but a O'Leary can't change his habits in the middle of a war."

"Do you realize that you are being insolent to a commissioned officer? And in war time? Heretofore, I have heard that you ran this company pretty much to your own taste, but that is ended now. I'll soon put a crimp in you."

"I'm full of crimps now, sir," chuckled O'Leary. "And jest 'cause I been insolent to so many Boches, enlisted men and officers alike. If I was ye, Lootinint Travers, I'd keep down a bit, or a Kraut might git insolint and make fertilizer of ye."

"Sergeant O'Leary, you are under arrest. I shall prefer charges against you. Sergeant Ashton there!" he called. "You are in charge of the 1st Section, Sergeant O'Leary being relieved."

"Aw nuts!" retorted Ashton, hotly. "You're not in training camp now. They don't put sergeants under arrest on the firing line for doing their duty."

"You are under arrest too. I'll show you men what military discipline means, firing line or not."

Crack! A rifle bullet hit dirt close to the lieutenant, who had half risen from the shell hole in his indignation. Down he ducked.

"Too damn bad it didn't bite him," growled Mike to O'Leary. "The dirty, four-flushin' bum."

"Easy, Flaherty, easy! That ain't nice now. His bars is jest gone to his head, that's all. Give him a chanct, me bye, he ain't a bad sort, only a bit top-heavy. I've seen 'em worse'n him, but they all tempered into fine steel with a little fire."

A whistle blast rang out. It was the signal for the line to prepare to advance. The doughs tensed, eyes on the hill in front of them.

"Hey there, Jack and Bill," said O'Leary, "be sinsible now. Jest 'cause ye's non-coms and yer stripes is new, don't take no foolish chances. The eyes o' the army ain't on ye, like ye think."

A prolonged whistle blast and the advance commenced. The rising of the men brought a sudden, concentrated fire from the Germans. The edge of the wood fairly blazed with vicious spurts of rifle fire. Machine guns, from hidden nests, strangely resembled riveting on steel as their staccato hammering reverberated among the trees.

O'Leary sprang into the lead of his section, while Jack and Bill stuck with their squads, in which were Flaherty and Jones. Lieutenant Travers, his officer's insignia missing, bravely led his platoon. Captain Halstead, as was his wont, was ahead of the line, with 1st Sergeant Duffy and two runners a little to the rear of him.

Men dropped like flies under the scathing hail of steel rapidly thinning the company, but the others kept on, grim determination written across their resolute faces.

About half way across the open Lieutenant Travers went down, struggled to get up, but couldn't make it. He had a jagged hole in his thigh where a ricochet had shattered the bone rendering him helpless. O'Leary ran to him, shouting for Sergeant Ashton to lead the platoon.

"Easy, Lootinint, easy," soothed O'Leary, bending over him. "Lay quiet, or ye'll give the pill-rollers a good excuse fer amputatin'. Take a drink o' this, and it ain't *water*." He thrust the neck of his canteen between the looey's teeth before he could answer. "Coneyack, but on me honor I ain't touched a drop since Bacarat."

"*You!*" Choking a little from the fiery liquor, Travers looked up at O'Leary. "*You help me? Why?*"

"Be yourself, be yourself! Ye don't suppose what ye said got me goat, do ye? Gimme yer hands now, and I'll heft ye on me back and carry ye to the woods, where ye'll be picked up by the stretcher-bearers. Ye ain't no heftier than a pound o' feathers."

"God, you're a *man*, O'Leary!"

"What ye think I was, a chorus-lady? Gimme yer hands, *quick*."

"No, I'll stay here. Leave me, before you are killed."

"I hate to be insolint under fire, sir, but on me back ye go!"

In one of the hottest fires yet experienced by the company, O'Leary streaked across the open as though unburdened and safely reached the woods. Here he gently laid the lieutenant at the foot of a tree in such a manner that he would be shielded from harm.

"SO LONG, Lootinint Travers," he said, squeezing the officer's hand. "I gotta jine me little Rainbows or else they'll git hurted."

And O'Leary was gone. The company, or more properly speaking, the platoon, had penetrated about fifty yards into the wood and was held up by a line of camouflaged machine guns, which raked the trees behind which the doughs had taken refuge, with a withering storm of steel-jackets. Dodging from trunk to trunk and firing his pistol at the darting flame-tongues from death-spewing muzzles, O'Leary finally rejoined his section.

Kneeling behind a large tree he glanced on each side of him. Jack was unhurt, sniping at a machine gun from a low bush. A bit farther on he could see Flaherty, lying on his belly and coolly working his bolt as though on the target range, and beyond Flaherty lay Jones, struggling to get a clip from his canvas bandolier. Bill, with three of his squad, bombs in hand, was crawling forward toward a clump of bushes from which streaked two jumping jets of fire.

Shrill whistle blasts rose aboye the racket. The command to advance again. Bill and his men, now close to the bush clump, loosed three bombs, which registered direct hits. Three blinding flashes and the guns were out of commission. Five Germans rushed from the clump, arms raised in surrender, and were ordered to the rear without escort. The Rainbows couldn't be bothered with prisoners.

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"Good work, Corp'ral Williams," complimented O'Leary as he passed Bill. "Keep back now, ye ain't the capt'in."

On the right of the line two more machine guns were successfully bombed and more prisoners floated to the rear. For about one hundred yards the American advance met with no resistance, except for a half-hearted sniping from behind cover, the snipers quickly surrendering when the doughboys reached them.

"The dirty skunks," growled Mike, wrathfully. "Shoot hell outta us and then give up when it's our turn to take a crack at 'em! Who started this lousy war anyways?" A pistol bullet cut the chin strap of his helmet. "*Ooww!*" he snapped. "'Tis good me chew wasn't on that side!"

A few yards more and the doughs walked into a real fight. From every tree, it seemed, a rifle cracked or a potato masher was hurled. Again the whistle. The charge!

Shouting, laughing hysterically, cheering wildly, the Americans dashed forward, bayonets ready. And this time they met a bunch of Tartars, the Germans not surrendering, but fighting hand-to-hand to the bitter finish. No quarter was asked and none was given. In some instances rifles were thrown away and doughboy and Kraut went to it with bare hands, rolling over and over on the ground, gouging, clawing, kicking and punching.

Three Prussians jumped from behind a bush and threw themselves upon Mike, who had unwittingly passed their ambush. The Irishman got one with his bayonet but went down under the weight of the other two. It looked like curtains for Flaherty. Shouting his battle-cry, "*Rain-bow! Rain-bow!*" O'Leary ran to Mike's rescue, jerking back one of the Germans by the collar and smashing him on the button with his fist. He fell like an ox under the hammer.

O'Leary wheeled to attack the other German, but Mike had him by the throat in a death grip.

"Look out, O'Leary!" cried out a youthful voice.

crushing blow on the helmet and O'Leary sank to his knees, half-stunned. A Prussian had swung the butt of his rifle, catching the Irishman squarely on the head, but the front sight tore a deep gash in the swinger's hand. With a curse he dropped the rifle, whipped out a knife and flung himself upon O'Leary, the steel raised to strike.

Crack! O'Leary felt the air of the bullet on his cheek. The Prussian crumpled in the middle and fell on his face, shot through the chest. Shaking his head fiercely the Irishman clambered dizzily to his feet.

"I—I had to take a chance, O'Leary," jerked out Bill, "or he would have knifed you."

"Thanks, Corp'ral. Always gamble in pinches like that, me lad. Looks like I owe ye somethin', Bill."

"Don't make me laugh!" Eyes alight, Bill raised the rifle and fired at a German.

Again the whistle blasts. Having mopped up the Germans who had elected to argue at close quarters, the Rainbows pushed higher up the hill, fighting each step of the way. Suddenly all resistance ceased and Captain Halstead held up a hand to halt for a breathing spell. The company commander then called his officers and non-coms to him.

"I don't like it, sir," said O'Leary, in reply to a question as to his opinion of the situation. "With the English we walked into a trap and was cut to pieces. The Krauts quit all of a suddint, jest like now, and we advanced into a mess o' pitfalls lined with sharp stakes. Then a lot o' barb wire stopped us dead."

"I think we will hit barbed wire too, Sergeant, but our orders are to take this hill, and hold it, regardless of the cost, so that the outfits on our right and left can advance. We are the key to the situation."

"A runner delivered the same message to me quite a while ago, sir," said 1st Lieutenant Lawson, another recent replacement. "We are to hold until relieved. I was unable to reach you, sir, until now."

"In five minutes I shall sound the advance," announced the captain, solemnly.

"If this hill is to be our monument, let us write our own epitaph on it. First, we shall take it, and secondly, hold it until relieved. Is that understood by each of you?" Heads nodded in acquiescence. "Then go to it, and may God be with us."

A regimental runner, blood dripping from his chin and a great, wet, red smudge widening on his blouse, staggered out of the bushes behind the group and fell forward at the captain's feet.

"A Company—Captain Halstead?" he jerked out, spitting crimson.

"Yes, my brave man, this is A Company and I am Captain Halstead."

"The colonel presents—his compliments—sir—and informs that—your company—having advanced too—rapidly has been cut off—and is—completely surrounded—with relief unable—to push forward—to your—help—"

A gush of blood from the runner's mouth. The captain wiped the lips dry when the hemorrhage had subsided.

"Is there anything more, son?" he asked, gently.

"Yes—sir—the colonel orders—that the hill—be taken and—held—if possible and says not—to forget that—you are—Rainbows and—"

A flood of blood from his mouth and he died, as did many runners in the Argonne; died only after their messages had been delivered. Reverently the captain covered the dead face with his handkerchief.

"He came through hell for us," he said, simply. "The least we can do is to give our lives as he has so nobly given his. Return to your posts. The advance shall be immediately resumed."



REACHING the remnant of his section, O'Leary thrust out a hand to Jack and Bill.

"Pals," he said, slowly, "ye're growed up now, in the army, and I'm treatin' ye as ye deserve—like soldiers. Looks like we's in the tightest jam of all, with no way out, but don't give up hope and don't admit ye're licked until

ye've kicked off, then git up and fight till ye win."

"Yes, O'Leary," replied Jack. Bill was unable to speak.

"And pals, don't fergit that Terrence X. O'Leary is with ye. When things is blackest, 'tis then me genius and luck walks hand in hand. Back to yer squads now, I got somethin' to say to the byes."

"What's the news, Big Shot?" timidly ventured Mike. "Ye seen a ghost?"

"Listen, ye lousy Rainbows," said O'Leary to his men. "We's gonna take that hill and we's gonna stay there all winter, if necessary. Git me? Okay! Stand by fer a whistle."

"I knowed it—I jest *knowed* it," whispered Mike to Jones. "When the Big Shot talks like that, it's the last act fer everybody. Somethin's gone flooey."

"*Somethin'?*" The whole damn army is been flooey since I joined up."

"Which don't speak so well fer ye, Mr. Jones. Anyhow, I won't hafta bury ye. That's what been worryin' me all this time—diggin' a hole fer a guy named *Jones*."

"Cripes, but you're funny! You and that other Mick. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

The whistle to advance! Jack looked at Bill and Bill looked at Jack, then they silently shook hands and stepped out.

Cautiously, almost timidly, the Rainbows pushed through the wood, sensing that disaster hung over them. Thinner and thinner grew the trees as they ascended the hill. O'Leary, automatic ready, had forged ahead of the platoon, which he now commanded, and gingerly felt his way with that sixth sense of his. His eyes darted all around him. Suddenly he stopped and held up a hand.

"Jest what I thought," he muttered. "Barb wire, and so thick a field mouse couldn't git through it." He signaled for the company to halt and hurried over to the captain. "Sir," he informed, "barb wire twenty yards to the front."

"Why, I can't see a thing, Sergeant, and I have been using my glasses."

"Take it from me it's there, sir, and the Krauts is waitin' fer us to reach it afore cuttin' loose. Now, if we stops ~~like we~~ ain't seen nothin' and sorta takes cover,

casual-like, behind trees, as if restin'—"

"That'll only delay the advance, sir," put in Sergeant Duffy, nervously. "Let's get it over with, and quickly. My nerves are crawling like worms, sir."

"Mine too, Sergeant Duffy. What have you in mind, O'Leary?"

"The way the wire is, there ain't no chancet of bustin' through, sir, and we'll be chewed to bits hackin' it down and cuttin' it. We got plenty o' bombs. Why not lay down a grenade barrage fer about thirty yards and blow a path?"

"A darned good idea, Sergeant. It shall be done."

"That means the company will have to pass through a lane," protested Duffy.

"It'll reduce our front too much and—"

"Write it on the mornin' report," grinned O'Leary.

Captain Halstead had the word to bomb the wire passed along, and indicated the space in which the bombs were to fall. On his whistle signal, a shower of Mills bombs hurtled through the air and the men continued throwing as fast as they could pull the pins, but not without aiming each bomb. The forest thundered with heavy detonations. The exploding missiles resembled a miniature creeping barrage as the Rainbows gradually lengthened their throws.

The Germans, sensing what was happening, cut loose with all they had, but the advancing bombers manfully stuck to their task as long as life was spared them. The remainder of the company, lying behind trees and in shell holes, waited for the signal to charge.

In charge of the bombing, O'Leary recklessly exposed himself, disdaining cover, so that his example would encourage the men to greater effort. Finally he waved his arm to the captain. The bombers, instructed to watch the Irish sergeant, stopped throwing. A whistle to the captain's mouth. The charge was on.

Except for spots, the bombs had done the work, making it possible for the doughs to negotiate the barbed wire trap. Captain Halstead, brandishing his pistol, led off. Hell itself blared forth. The captain was almost cut in two by a machine

gun burst, then Sergeant Duffy went down, falling in a mangled heap on top of his officer, no more to worry over his morning report.

The bloody horror which followed is indescribable. Shrieks, cries, curses, insane shoutings, and always that *crack! crack! crack!* splitting ear drums and shredding nerves. A Rainbow killed, slumping into an ugly heap—another Rainbow leaping over his body and pushing forward, only to fall under the withering fire himself. Lives were snuffed out three and four at a time, but the advance continued.

LESS than forty men were now left of the company. Angry, ominous, growling cheers rose from forty hoarse throats; a blood-lusting roar that boded ill for the Germans, for the wire had been passed and the enemy would have to fight it out, man to man. No longer were the surviving Rainbows human beings, but destroying demons bent on revenge. And the most vengeful demon of them all was the powerful O'Leary.

His towering form was everywhere, now jabbing with a bayonet, or hurling a bomb, or firing his pistol, or swinging a bare fist, cutting, slashing, smashing and all the while giving vent to shouts of encouragement to the others. Flaherty fought close to him, but Flaherty was not an O'Leary, despite his valiant work.

The Rainbows, battle-mad and burning with an unquenchable fire to avenge their fallen comrades, could not be resisted.

On all hands the Germans either gave way in terror before the Yankee maniacs or went down to their deaths. Even Jack and Bill were fiends incarnate as they followed their hero, O'Leary, firing from the hip, thrusting with their bayonets, or throwing bombs at machine guns.

Up, up, up labored the Rainbows, leaving behind them a trail of blood and death; five Germans falling for every American that went under.

At last the crest of the hill! A crest fortified by a huge concrete pill-box that spewed destruction in all directions from a dozen guns. But there was no stopping

the Rainbows now. That crest belonged to them and take it they would. And take it they did, O'Leary being the first to leap the concrete wall into the emplacement; an emplacement that could easily accommodate fifty men.

The German crews stuck to their guns, but when that killing monster, a monster that bore a charmed life, leaped into their midst, it was time for flight. And fly they did, like terrified rats deserting a burning ship.

Over the concrete clambered the Rainbows, panting and gasping, too far spent even to fire at the retreating Germans. Although his chest heaved and his heart pounded violently from his superhuman exertions, O'Leary, to preserve the American morale sprang to a Maxim and trained it on the fleeing Germans. Spurred by his example, two other Rainbow machine gunners jumped to the guns and opened fire until the enemy had disappeared into the trees.

O'Leary stood up, wiped sweat out of his eyes and took stock of the company. A pang shot through him. There were a scarce two dozen in the emplacement.

Jack leaned against a Maxim trying to get his breath, blood trickling down a cheek from a cut on his head. Near him sat Bill, a sleeve ripped from cuff to shoulder revealing a bleeding left arm. Flaherty stood near, swaying drunkenly as he tried to maintain his balance, his face cut, scratched and bleeding, while his left arm dangled helplessly at his side, its bone shattered. At Mike's feet sat Jones, chin resting on palms, a picture of despair and exhaustion.

From his inventory of the men O'Leary's eyes roamed around the emplacement. The Maxims seemed to be in good condition and there was a plentiful supply of ammunition. Near each gun was a store of potato-mashers. German rifles littered the cement floor. O'Leary noted with satisfaction that the mammoth pill-box was ideal for defense, situated as it was in the center of a circular clearing and on the crest of the hill.

For a while at least there would be no counter attack, reasoned O'Leary, for the

Germans were not hungry for another bite at the doughy doughs. Only the Huns among the trees kept up a desultory fire on the emplacement.

"On yer dogs, me brave Rainbows!" cried O'Leary. "This ain't no comfort station and they's a war on. Sargint Ashton, take charge of the north side. Well, well, and if it ain't me old pal! Hop to it, Corp'ral Reddin'; show what ye're made of and repel boarders from the south. Strike me pink, do me eyes deceive me? Nobody else but Corp'ral Bill Williams, what won the Distinguished Service Cross at Baccarat! Turn yer nose to the east, Bill, and watch the sun rise." O'Leary wiped his brow with a hand. "May the good saints preserve me! I thought ye was dead, ye lousy A. P. A. Or is it yer ghost, Privit Michael J. Flaherty?"

"The foul fiend git ye!" Mike valiantly tried to grin, but it was more a grimace of pain than merriment. "County Mayo shootin' off ag'in!"

"Set down on yer fanny, Mike, and when things is straightened out I'll fix up yer arm." O'Leary wheeled on Jones. "A helluva position fer the Admiral of the Rear. On the poop deck with ye and take charge of the west battery, John Paul Jones."

"I ain't no lousy non-com," grumbled Jones. "You brung me here, so do it yourself. I've *resigned*."

"Ye're a non-com now, Sargint Jones, but *Privit* will be writ on yer tombstone. Off yer fanny, Admiral."

"What in hell we gonna do—fight some more?" demanded a doughboy named Rawlins, the biggest goldbrick of the company. "We done enough already. I'm for surrenderin'. Whadda you say, fellows? It's the only way to save our lives. We ain't got a chanct holdin' this lousy pill-box against the whole German army."

"Ye're there, Rawlins, ye're there," laughed O'Leary. "Always havin' yer joke!"

"Joke hell! I *mean* it. When they come at us I'm gonna grab sky."

"If you do," cried Jack, wheeling upon him, "so help me God, I'll shoot you."

"Tut—tut, Jack," reproved O'Leary. "Where's yer sinse of humor? Don't butt in lest ye're asked. Me and Rawlins is funnin' a bit. Ye're a damn good machine gunner, Rawlins, me pal, so let's cut it out now and git down to business. We's all in this thing together, so give Sargint Ashton a hand, like a nice feller."

Rawlins scowled blackly at O'Leary, then a smile gradually crept over his grimy countenance.

"Okay, Sarge," he said, cheerily. "We'll stick till hell freezes over, me and you."

"And thaws out ag'in, Rawlins, old sock."

Rawlins reported to Sergēant Ashton, who was busy placing his men.

"Why didn't ye shoot the lousy goldbricker?" growled Mike, as he ripped open a first-aid packet with his good hand. "He might of started a stampede, the lousy anarchist."

"It ain't the way I handles 'em, Privit Flaherty. If I'da shot him, we'd be one less, now we got a damn good fighter what'll be with us till we wind up der Vatch on der Rhine."

"Ye win, Big Shot, but I'm thinkin' ye'll have no place to spend yer winnin's afore this day is done."

"Shure, and the day's got a helluva long time to run yit, me crape hanger." O'Leary looked at his wristwatch. "It's only nine o'clock A. M., and fashionable funerals is held in the afternoon. When I'm *dead* ye kin bury me deep, but I'll be damned if ye'll bury me while I'm alive and kickin', sez I."



UNDER O'Leary's direction the emplacement was soon put in order. The dead Germans were dumped over the concrete walls, after removing their rifle ammunition in case it should be needed; the German hand grenades were distributed, with instructions how to use them where it was necessary; and all the serviceable machine guns were loaded. In all there were sufficient gunners for four skeleton crews. This would give the Rain-

bows a gun to command each quarter of the compass. When everything had been completed to O'Leary's taste, which was quite exacting, he addressed the small garrison.

"Fellers," he said solemnly, but with that forcefulness and winning personality of his, "we're in a tight jam, that I'll admit, and there's only one way out—to stick until we's relieved. Ye've got guts, and I've got guts, but I ain't got no more'n ye has, and ye ain't got no more'n I has. Git me? We's all Rainbows, and there never was a Kraut division hatched what could lick two dozen Rainbows. I ain't askin' ye to do more'n I'll do. If I quit, ye kin quit; if I stick, ye stick. Is it a bet?"

"We're with you, Sergeant O'Leary," cried Rawlins. "A few minutes ago I squawked my head off, but I'm stickin' now."

"If a guy like Rawlins can stand the gaff," shouted a dough to the others, "I reckon we can. How about it, fellers?"

A defiant cheer welled from the emplacement; a cheer that carried deep into the trees surrounding the crest of the hill.

"Do you hear them?" sighed a German unterofficier of a hidden machine gun crew. "How can we win? Cheering and making merry. *Ach!* It is no use. The war is lost."

But there were hundreds of other Germans in the wood who had different ideas, especially the officers, for an immediate advance was ordered against the intrepid little band of Americans.

"Shall I fire if I see anything, Sergeant O'Leary?" called Jack from his machine gun.

The Rainbows in the emplacement tensed and gritted teeth; Corporal Redding's gun defended the south side and his question meant that the Germans were in the rear. The pill-box was surrounded then, with all retreat cut off and little hope of rescue. A fight to the bitter end!

"Let 'em have it, Jack, but be shure first that it ain't jest a couple o' Krauts scoutin' around."

"Germans moving among the trees on my side, Sergeant," announced Sergeant Ashton. "In force."

"On my side, too," cried Bill. "Trees full of them."

"And over here," called Jones. "A whole *brigade*."

"That makes it anonymous," said O'Leary. "Give 'em hell and fire low, we's on a hill, remimber."

"Ye mean *unanimous*, Big Shot," corrected Mike, just to show that he was still to be considered. "I can't learn ye nothin'. Yer grammar is frightful."

Jack's gun started pounding, then the other three. The Germans were attacking from all four sides at once, and in force. Up the slope they came in the open, stolidly, confidently, as though they would crush the few defenders of the emplacement under their iron heels.

But the Germans had not reckoned that these twenty-four Rainbows were desperate, that they could shoot and that they were commanded by a sergeant who had not yet learned what fear or defeat meant.

Every time a Rainbow rifle cracked a German was hit, and those Rainbow bolts were being worked as only doughboys could work them. Even though using Maxims, the Rainbow gunners couldn't miss at the distance, and the enemy melted by squads under their well directed fire. But right through this blazing death climbed the Germans, goaded on by their officers and firing as they advanced.

When they were within thirty yards of the pill-box, the Rainbows dropped rifles and resorted to bombs, some using the German potato mashers and others the deadly Mills.

Through these blasts of death, men falling on all sides of him, climbed a German sergeant, exhorting his section to follow him. Realizing that the sergeant would have to be stopped, O'Leary took steady aim at him with his automatic and squeezed trigger. The German spun dizzily, staggered, sagged at the knees, recovered his balance, then gallantly pushed upward, waving an arm and beseeching his men to capture the pill box.

"I could bump ye off, boloney," muttered O'Leary to himself, "but it ain't in me, not after yer show of guts. Shure, and ye remind me of one Sargint Ter-

rence X. O'Leary, of the Rainbow Division."

O'Leary fired at a corporal who had stopped to hurl a potato masher into the emplacement. The bullet plowed through his coal-scuttle helmet and bored into his brain. Down he tumbled, knocking over two privates behind him. The wounded sergeant was not within ten yards of the pill box, but was floundering about and stumbling as though he had lost his eyesight.

But the bombs proved too much, for the Germans broke and raced down the hill to the trees, flinging away their rifles in the wild stampede. However, those closest to the sergeant kept on, about ten of them, swinging potato mashers through the air and yelling madly. One of their bombs landed in a corner of the pill box and exploded, killing two Rainbows and wounding three more.

The sergeant reached the concrete wall and tried to clamber over it. Jones, having left his gun, thrust a .45 almost into the sergeant's mouth, but O'Leary, right behind him, knocked the pistol up, the bullet going high.

"Not him, Admiral," cried O'Leary. "He's all in."

The sergeant's men never reached the wall, dropping under the fire of the Rainbows. O'Leary caught the German sergeant by the shoulders and lifted him into the emplacement, then shoved his pistol against his breast.

"Be nice now," he said. "Ye can't capture us all alone, me brave boloney."

With a despairing groan the sergeant sank to the floor.

"Look out!" yelled a Rainbow in terror, pointing to a hand grenade that a wounded German had tossed into the emplacement.

The potato masher hit the barrel of a Maxim, bounded off and rolled within a yard of O'Leary, who was bending over the wounded sergeant. A Rainbow dived through the air, and swept the bomb under him with his outspread arms. A terrific blast staggered those near the explosion. The mangled Rainbow half sat

up, although his stomach was almost blown away, and tried to smile at the horrified O'Leary. It was Private Rawlins, the company goldbrick de luxe.

"So—long—pal," he jerked out. "This—makes us—even—"

And he fell back, dead.

"God, what a man," choked O'Leary. "And they called him—a—goldbrick!" He sprang to his feet and looked around at the staring Rainbows. "A cheer fer Private Rawlins, byes. A Rainbow what is a Rainbow."

Their danger forgotten, the doughboys responded with a will. O'Leary uncovered and mumbled a prayer over the body. However, even such a noble sacrifice could not interfere for long with the business in hand.

O'LEARY quickly took count of the casualties. Nine Rainbows lay dead and two were dying from wounds. Bill was shot through the shoulder and Jack was rendering him first aid. Among the dead lay Sergeant Ashton, a hand still gripping the traversing handle of his gun. Jones was spitting blood, a steel jacket having passed through his mouth, perforating both cheeks.

"Great work, me byes," complimented O'Leary. "But we ain't done yit. After they gits their second wind they'll be on top o' us ag'in. Are we downhearted?"

"No!—No!" welled in fierce chorus. "Let 'em come, Sergeant!"

"That's the stuff what wins wars! They can't lick the Rainbows!"

"Ain't ye never gonna git hit, Big Shot?" grinned Mike. "Or perhaps ye're dead and don't know it."

"Me heart's still beatin' fer ye, Mr. Flaherty," O'Leary laughed. "How's yer arm feel?"

"Ain't nothin' the matter with me flipper. Shure, and didn't ye see me bowl 'em over with me shootin' iron?"

"That I did, but ye missed more'n ye hit."

"Sez ye! The ones I missed is still layin' quiet, ain't they?"

O'Leary crossed over to Jack and Bill, smiling encouragingly at them.

"We gave it to 'em on the nose, pal," said Bill, with a grimace of pain as Jack poured iodine into his wound. "And we're still there."

"Now whadda ye know 'bout that?" O'Leary ripped open his first-aid packet. "I'll attend to his little scratch, Corp'ral Reddin'," he said. "Ye go look over yer gun and see if she's in the humor fer another argumint, like a good feller." Jack nodded and went to his Maxim. "Nothin' to worry about, Bill," informed O'Leary, after an examination of the wound. "But it'll mean blighty fer ye."

"Blighty, hell!" O'Leary arched his brows and grinned. The kid was there. "You don't think I'm going to leave you and Jack, do you?"

"Of course ye ain't. And how we need ye!"

"Hey, come here, O'Leary," called Jones, his voice muffled by his wounded cheeks. "This boloney you saved is gittin' hard."

"Now what's the matter, Sarge?" asked O'Leary, going to the disabled German sergeant. "Ain't they treatin' ye right?"

"You are fools!" replied the German, in good English. "Why did you get separated from your battalion and push so far forward?"

"That's jest a habit o' the Rainbows, Sargint von Hindenburg. Ye see, Sedan lays acrost the river not far away and we was mighty anxious to stick the proper flag over it."

"*Sedan!* Never will the Americans enter Sedan. We will crush you into the ground."

"Well, of course, I never thought o' that. All right, we'll pass up Sedan. What else ails you?"

"You are the one that helped me over the wall, are you not?" O'Leary nodded. "And stopped that *pig* there from shootin' me?" The sergeant indicated Jones, and O'Leary nodded again. "I owe my life to you. You are doomed, all of you, here on top of the hill."

"Now that's what I call front page news, Sarge. We'll run it next edition as a special extra."

"It is not well to jest when you are about to die. Our orders were not to take any prisoners. You understand what that means?"

"Yeah, I ain't blind, Sarge. But how about the wounded?"

"There will be no wounded."

"Hey, wait a minit, I don't quite git ye. Ye mean that—"

"Exactly. Our major has gone mad—has been mad for days. He drinks and drinks and drinks and lusts for blood. Retreating has crazed him—made a maniac of him. There will be no prisoners, Sergeant."

"Why'n hell do ye tell me this? Shure, and I could kill ye to git even fer what's comin' to me."

"But you won't. Not after saving my life. I told you because I did not want you to die blaming Germany for the crime of one mad officer."

"Thanks."

O'Leary squeezed the sergeant's hand and walked away, a deep frown on his face. Involuntarily he glanced at Jack and Bill, then at the wounded Flaherty, and the frown grew deeper.

In the distance to the south he could hear the sounds of fighting. The Rainbows were hammering at the Germans to break through, but they were too far away and never would be able to reach the hill in time, he mused. Sighing, he got out his note book and started scribbling on a leaf. When he had finished he returned the book and again looked over at the youngsters.

"When the Rainbows finds us," he mumbled to himself, "there won't be no mistake how them two kids died, if they looks in me note book. But two mothers' hearts will be broke fer this day's work, still they'll be proud of their little byes. Cripes, and I hadda fall down on me promise to them."

"Say, Big Shot," called Mike, "ain't it about time ye got to work on one of them nifty schemes of yers? Yer genius and luck better start walkin' hand in hand or it'll be too late."

"Nuts on ye, Privit Flaherty, o' County

Cork! Never be it said that a O'Leary folded up over a little mess like this. Me luck won't desert me, never fear. It jest *can't*," he added desperately



WITHOUT warning, an intense machine gun barrage was directed at the crest of the hill. Private Jones, who was walking back to his gun, clapped a hand to his neck and rolled over, kicking spasmodically. His head was almost severed from his body.

"Poor old Jonesy," muttered Mike, looking down at him. "And they hadda take ye." He closed his eyes to shut out the horrible sight. "It won't be long now, Sliver, me bye," he murmured. "I ain't fergot ye, pal. Save a place at the mess table fer me."

The next quarter-hour was a hell on earth, the steel hail chipping the cement and ricochets screaming over the pill box. The din was deafening. However, only two Rainbows were hit, and those by ricochets. Then a new and deadlier menace. A burst of machine gun bullets hit squarely in a corner of the emplacement, mangling the body of Sergeant Ashton and killing three men near a gun.

"The saints save us." O'Leary made the sign of the cross. "The lousy Krauts is got a typewriter in a tree."

At the risk of his life he crawled to the center of the emplacement and stopped a few feet from where the steel was biting into the cement. The eyes of the surviving Rainbows followed his every move.

"In close to the south wall," shouted O'Leary, at the same time motioning with his arm, realizing that his voice was drowned in the awful racket. "In—in with ye! The gun can't reach ye there!"

Understanding the signal the doughs quickly obeyed. Pretty soon the gun packed up, as did the others. The resulting silence was almost painful.

"Everybody lay stiller'n death," ordered O'Leary. "Don't move, mind ye. I got a hunch somethin's gonna happen."

"An officer to the south with a white

flag, Sergeant," called Jack, peeping through an aperture by his gun.

"Jest as I thought. Still now, every one of ye, don't move a muscle. He wants to find out if we's napoo fini."

"On the hill there!" sounded a faint voice in English. "Stand up and talk to me. We won't fire. I carry a flag of truce."

No answer from the pill box. The officer drew nearer and nearer, calling as he came, but still not a sound from the emplacement. Finally he turned about and disappeared among the trees.

"Ain't quite shure," said O'Leary, "and he's afeared to come any closter. But we didn't fall fer it."

"It's an old trick we use," informed the German sergeant, apologetically. "We don't violate the flag of truce, but we gain valuable information."

Hardly had the officer vanished in the wood than the machine gun barrage opened again and the gun in the tree swept its bullets back and forth in the pill box. Above the cracking of the steel O'Leary heard a loud humming in the air above. He looked up. A German plane was circling high over the top of the hill.

"So ye're gittin' nosey too," he snorted angrily. "Try a new one."

Not a Rainbow moved. Then once more the barrage packed up. O'Leary glanced up. Just as he thought, the plane was maneuvering for a dive. Down it came, machine gun spitting fire, and swooped over the pill box. No one was hit but the steel jackets came perilously near.

"Git ready, fellers," warned O'Leary. "They'll be comin' at us now."

O'Leary guessed the turn, because a German section, deployed about a yard apart, started climbing the hill.

"Don't fire till they gits clost," instructed O'Leary. "Then when I tips ye off, hit 'em on the chin with everythin' ye got. We'll learn 'em not to pull a fast one on Terrence X. O'Leary."

It was nervous work for the battle-weary Rainbows, crouching inactive while the enemy approached nearer and nearer. Many anxious, inquiring glances

were flashed appealingly at the Irish sergeant, but O'Leary only shook his head.

"Keep yer shirts on," he admonished. "I'm out-guessin' 'em. They'll be so astonished they'll think it's Christmas. Ye kin tell they thinks we's flooey by the careless way they advances. Ye ever seen Krauts walk so confidin' before?"

"*Confidint*," corrected Mike. "Won't ye never learn *nothin'*?"

When the Germans had arrived within about sixty yards of the pill box, O'Leary dropped his hand, which he had held raised.

FOUR machine guns belched their destruction and rifles blazed. Taken completely by surprise, the Germans went down in heaps. Then the attack broke, the members of the section running in all directions. As it happened, a squad of about fifteen men came directly for the emplacement. Suddenly, realizing their mistake they hesitated, then must have decided that it was even safer to attack than to retreat, because they stormed the pill box.

Five of their number went down before the concrete walls were reached, but the other ten climbed over and engaged in a hand-to-hand encounter with the defenders. Had the Germans only known it, an easy victory was within their grasp, because the weary Rainbows were hardly able to stand, but the attackers were half-licked before they mixed, considering the Americans invincible. Even so, the battle waged furiously, both sides trying to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

O'Leary brained a hatless German with a mighty swing of a rifle he had grabbed up. The stock splintered from the impact. A Luger barked behind him and he went down, shot through the left thigh. A bayonet drew back to pin him to the floor, but Mike shot the German and the rifle clattered on the cement, its wielder toppling backwards.

Holding to the barrel of a Maxim O'Leary drew himself up and gained his feet, resting his weight on his good leg and leaning against the emplacement wall. In this position he whipped out his auto-

matic and killed a German who was lunging at Bill with a bayonet.

Jack fell over, pierced by a bayonet in the side. The German quickly withdrew the steel knife and raised it again to thrust, but again Mike's ready automatic came to the rescue. Rising to a knee, Jack picked up his pistol, which he had dropped, and emptied it at three Germans who had a doughboy cornered. One of the Germans fell, but the other two lunged at the same time and the doughboy was spitted like a fowl.

With a cry of rage O'Leary slipped in a fresh clip, fired twice, and the two Germans tumbled over their victim's body, themselves dead. A German across the pill box lifted rifle to shoulder and aimed at Mike, who was emptying his pistol as fast as he could pull trigger. O'Leary saw him in the nick of time and laid him low with a lightning shot, but a bullet shattered O'Leary's collar bone and he fell to his knees, his left arm hanging like a broken stick. The emplacement began to whirl around him and the noise of the fighting grew dim and confused.

With a mighty effort he steadied himself and fired his automatic at the only erect German he could see through the fast-growing haze. The German tumbled over but a stray bullet from outside the pill box hit O'Leary just above the left elbow, fracturing the bone, and his lights went out.

"Big Shot! Big Shot!" cried Mike, in anguish. "Git up, Big Shot! Git up, ye lousy A. P. A. from the *north* o' Ireland! On yer dogs, O'Leary! Terrence, me bye, 'tis Michael J. Flaherty, o' County Cork, what's callin' ye yellin'. Big Shot, show yer stuff! Where's that lousy luck o' yers? Oh, God, he's kilt!" Mike reverently crossed himself. "The Big Shot's done fer."

Two big tears trickled down his dirty, blood-smeared cheeks. Valiantly he tried to reach the fallen O'Leary, but a pistol bullet has passed through his legs above the knees and he was helpless.

"Terrence, speak to me! Never be it said that a O'Leary quit in front of a

bunch o' crummy Dutchmen. Ye've won, Terrence, they's licked."

Slowly O'Leary's senses returned and he raised up on his right elbow. The red haze began to clear from his blood-shot eyes and he looked around him. Not a Rainbow was on his feet.

"Atta bye, O'Leary!" cried Mike, joyfully. "How ye feelin', Big Shot?"

"None o' yer damn business!" O'Leary blinked, gritted teeth and raised himself higher. "Say 'sir' when ye addresses a officer."

"Sez ye!"

O'Leary searched for Jack and Bill. There was Jack, leaning back against the wall, chin on chest and a big red smudge widening on his blouse.

"Jack, me bye, chin up!" called O'Leary. "Tell me ye ain't dead."

Jack's head lifted an inch or so and his eyes opened wearily.

"I—I'm all right, pal," he answered, feebly. "Just—a—scratch." And the head lowered again.

From Jack, O'Leary's eyes traveled farther on, to come to rest on the slumped form of Bill. He called and called to him, but no answer. With a miraculous display of fortitude, his face distorted with suffering, he dragged himself, a foot at a time, to the wounded youth.

"Bill," he choked, his breath hissing in great gasps, "it's—yer pal—Bill, it's the—Big Shot—hissself." He caught Bill's hand and squeezed it with all his remaining strength. "Corp'ral Williams—make yer—report—"

"All present—or accounted—for—sir."

"The good s a i n t s—be—praised." Weakly O'Leary unhooked his canteen and lifted it to his mouth. "May—the devil—take—me—fer breakin'—me timperince—pledge," he muttered, then swallowed a deep swig.

"Are ye drinkin' coffee-aw-lay, Big Shot?" called Mike.

"Nuts on—ye!" O'Leary took another swig and his eyes brightened. "'Tis the real—stuff—Privit Flaherty—o' County—Cork." Once again the canteen was up-ended. "Hot dog! Trot out yer German army! There, ye connivin' Mick!" With

surprising strength O'Leary tossed the canteen to Flaherty. "And if ye drink it all, I'll crawl up yer back like a loose window shade!"

"I bet it's water." Mike took a drink. "That's why ye're givin' it away." Another drink and back came the canteen.

O'Leary then forced a few drops between Bill's closed lips.

"Drink it up, pal," he crooned, "but tell yer mother ye was wounded, else I wouldn't of give ye none."

"Big Shot! Big Shot!" cried Mike. "I don't hear no firin'. Listen, do ye?"

"Ye're nuts," retorted O'Leary. "Me ears is roarin' like Niagara."

"I guess I hear it," replied Mike, but skeptically. "Where's that lousy luck o' yers, Big Shot? We could use a helluva lot o' it right now."

"Aha!" O'Leary again hit the canteen. "I got a scheme, Mike, a *darbl*!"

"I knowed it—I jest knowed it!" Flaherty actually beamed. "What is it, Big Shot? Tell me, pal."

"I done fergot it. Passed outta me head jest like that. Now what was I thinkin' of? Oh, yes, never be it said that a—"

"Cripes, we's sunk!" cried Mike, in shaky voice. "The Krauts is comin' ag'in, Big Shot. Thousands of 'em! The hill is lousy with 'em. And they's chargin' right at us."

"Don't fergit ye're a Rainbow, Mike, and fight like hell." O'Leary dropped the canteen and picked up an automatic near Bill's hand. "Git all ye kin, Mike, me bye, 'cause they ain't takin' no prisoners and there won't be no wounded, like he said." O'Leary pointed to the body of the German sergeant, who lay killed, a ricochet having scattered his brains during the hand-to-hand fighting. "Show 'em ye're from County Cork, which ain't nothin' to brag about."

"There ain't no use, Big Shot. I ain't got no ammo, and me gun's empty."

"Then fight 'em with yer bare fist, Mike. Anythin', but *fight*."

"I—I can't, Big Shot. I'm—I'm—sick. I told ye when—ye're luck left ye—it'd be curtains—fer us—all."

"But it ain't left me, Mike. I kin see it wavin' at me. Fight, damn ye, *fight!*" O'Leary lifted the automatic and gazed, hot-eyed at the south wall, waiting for the first German to show himself. "Never be it said that a O'Leary wouldn't fight to the last drop."



A GIGANTIC form suddenly towered above the concrete. It was a German captain, and behind him bobbed a myriad of coal-scuttle helmets. Into the pill box they leaped.

"Rain—bow!" cried O'Leary, aiming pistol at the captain and pulling trigger. The hammer fell with a sharp click. The gun was empty. "Then take it straight." O'Leary tried to throw the pistol into the captain's face, but his strength failed him and the automatic dropped at his side. "Ye can't lick me!" he screamed. "Ye *can't*, I say!" Frantically he grabbed for the pistol again, but a German boot kicked it away.

"Sergeant," said the German captain, stooping over the Irishman, "you and your men put up a noble fight, but it is all over now."

"Ye're a bloody liar, it's jest begun! Mike, Mike, ye lousy Mick, throw me a gat! Bill, on yer feet! *Rainbows—Rainbows*—up and at 'em—don't let the boloneys win! *Jack! Jack!* Where are ye all?" sobbed the frantic Irishman. "*Jones! Ashton! Sliver!* Stick with it! Duffy, go to it, me bye, and ye'll never hafta change yer lousy mornin' report ag'in, I promise on the word of a O'Leary."

Tears streaming down his pale cheeks, O'Leary collapsed in a heap, a bloody mess.

When he opened his eyes he found himself lying on a stretcher and swathed in bandages. He blinked stupidly, for all around him stood Germans, laughing and talking excitedly. Again he blinked, because they were talking with doughboys, and *Rainbows* at that.

"Aw nuts!" he exclaimed, wrathfully. "Somebody slipped a pill in that coney-ack."

"Is that ye, Big Shot!" The voice came from beside him. "'Tis me, Michael J. Flaherty, o' County Cork, and proud of it!"

"And I'm here too, pal," issued from the other side of Mike. "Corporal Jack Redding, Rainbow, and proud of it."

"Corporal Bill Williams, Rainbow, reports all present or accounted for, Sergeant O'Leary."

"The detail's shot to hell!" ejaculated O'Leary, in stupefied amazement. "I'm layin' on me back, I guess, and hearin' things. Or else I'm dead, and don't know it."

"Big Shot, ain't ye heard the news?" asked Mike, excitedly. "Ain't ye heard it?"

"Somebody been hurt or somethin'? What in hell's all the lousy boloneys jabberin' about? I ask ye, what they doin' here, with a war on, and gabbin' with *Rainbows?*"

"The armistice is been signed, ye thick Mick. The war's *over.*"

"The war *over?*" It was a gasp of dismay. "Then what'n hell will Sargint Terrence X. O'Leary do fer a job?"

"Go back to yer truck, where ye belong."

"Git up, ye bum! Stick up yer mitts! Never be it said that a O'Leary took a insult from a Flaherty, o' County Cork. So the war's over, is it? Then nice and gentle-like, I ask ye, Privit Michael J. Flaherty, and be careful with yer reply, fer yer life hangs on the corrictness of yer answer, *who won the war?*"

"Who else but Terrence X. O'Leary, Rainbow?"

"Correct as hell! Take yer post, Privit Flaherty."

"Have you got a cigarette, O'Leary," called Jack. "I'm dying for a smoke."

"Smokin', is it? Always tryin' to dis-sapate! Ye'll git no cigarette from me, 'till ye write to yer mother, both ye and Bill. And Jack, take a little credit fer yerself. I ain't stingy."

TRAITOR WINGS



"Try your murder tricks on somebody else," grunted Fowler. With a violent wrench he swung the wheel over and leaped for safety.

When mysterious death stalks Allied pilots Lieutenant Fowler, vengeance bent, hurls his Spad across treacherous skies and is caught in the backwash of German intrigue.

by HERBERT L. McNARY

"LISTEN to me, you buzzards. I'm tellin' yuh." When "Hard-Boiled" Harding, C.O. of the 13th Squadron, used that tone, an ordinary skyscraper with but a single bar on his collar listened. If he even so much as let his eyes wander he'd find himself stretched flat on the tarmac before he could bat an eyelash. A square guy, but a rough one, this ex-marine top kicker. There were no court martials in the 13th Squadron. The C. O. tried, prosecuted and passed judgment

—and executed that judgment with his fists and had no use for a man who didn't fight back. Hard-boiled, but he got results where others had failed ignominiously.

"The brass hats have passed it on to me and some more squadron commanders in this sector," continued the C. O. after pausing for his initial remark to sink in. He had the fliers lined up outside the mess shack, a habit from his days as a top kicker when he gave a company oration.

"I'm passin' the buck onto you. There's a plague on observation planes and photo crates as you damn well know. They're bein' shot down as fast as they go up, and you guys that are supposed to be givin' 'em protection aren't doin' a damn thing about it."

"Well," growled Blondy Niland rebelliously, "why don't some of these wise guys that do so much yelpin' find out how they're bein' washed out. We can't figure it."

"Maybe it's some new invention," piped up Lefty Treal.

"Yeah?" drawled the C. O. "The death ray and all that bunk. There ain't no mystery as to what brings 'em down. They've crashed behind our lines and examination shows they've been shot down with bullet holes and even bullets in the bodies. Some ballistic guy has identified 'em as Spandau bullets. Where's the mystery about that? And that two-seater that was shot down near Chatillon. Three separate ground reports said they saw the plane that did the job."

"Well, they're all wet," protested Rusty Chandler, an ace with four enemy planes and two balloons to his credit. "I saw that two-seater crash and the plane those eggs saw was mine or another Spad, for I saw it—the Spad. These ground eggs think every plane is a Jerry crate. It's as much as your life is worth to fly over your own trenches. Our guys think a red, white and blue marking is a gunnery target."

"Oh, yeah?" drawled Harding. "Well, a guy that's plastered three-quarters of the time ought to see plenty. You saw the two-seater crash, but you couldn't see the E. P. that dropped him. The trouble with you buzzards is you don't want to see him. Two-seaters don't make a thing to you. You don't give a damn how many O. B. pilots go West—"

"Aren't you too severe, sir?"

Harding checked himself in surprise and sought the source of this interruption. It came from a slender chap of possibly twenty-one years, although he looked eighteen or nineteen. Dit Fowler was a comparatively new man.

He had been a member of the 13th only a few weeks. He had proven himself a good man in the air although no *descendus* had been officially credited to him. Two claims were held up for confirmation.

"Oh, severe, am I?"

"I think so, sir, if you include me among those you state have no desire to find the German who has been shooting down our two-seaters. I've been looking for him. My brother was one of those shot down by him—murdered in my estimation."

Harding's brow creased in a puzzled frown.

"Your brother? I don't remember any Fowler—"

"Half brother to be exact. His name was Eldridge. He was with the 92nd. He was four years older than I was, but no two brothers were ever closer to each other than Bob—"

His voice broke slightly at the mention of the name.

"I don't mind his going. We knew what we were in for. But I don't think he was shot down fairly."

"Hmm," grunted Harding. He swept the line of pilots with his steely glare.

"I guess I don't need to say anything more. If you guys ain't got the heart to go through for Fowler—well, I'm all washed up with you."

Again he eyed them and turned and walked away.

"I'm not asking you fellows to do anything for me," stated Fowler to the other pilots, "except that if you find out who it is or what it is that's shooting down these two-seaters, please let me know."

THE pilots grunted in evasion. They could sympathize with Fowler and understand how he felt about it, but if they found the Jerry responsible—well, they wouldn't be likely to leave him to tell someone about it. They drifted toward the hangars. Flights had been out and back on regular patrols, but it was a twenty-four hour duty when a hunt like this was on.

Dit Fowler had his Spad rolled out to the line and warmed. He adjusted a helmet about a stern, grim face and carefully cleaned and inspected his guns. He listened to his motor as carefully as might a concert master to the tuning of a piano. He made certain that everything was in perfect order before he gave word to clear the chocks.

Some had already left the drome and others were preparing to do so. Dit climbed for good altitude and headed in the general direction of Chatillon. He was working on a hunch. With customary German method the killer seemed to hunt in different sectors according to a schedule. If Dit had doped him right he was due back in the vicinity of Chatillon. Yesterday he had missed him, but yesterday hadn't been a good day for flying—or rather for surprises. Today appeared to be better from the point of view of the killer. Allied artillery was active and would call for a number of observing planes in the air; and the sky was overcast with low-hanging banks of clouds that would screen the mysterious hawk of the air. Fowler held no credence for death rays or for any fantastic rigamarole. Machine gun bullets shot down Bob—and those bullets came from a plane.

As Fowler came in sight of the lines that bent in front of the shell-shattered houses of Chatillon he made out an observing D. H. directing fire above the American lines and wisely keeping beneath a large break in the clouds so that no killer might plunge down and take the observer unawares. As Fowler approached the observer warily swung away and Dit could see the man in the rear cockpit crouch behind his gun in readiness. Satisfied, however, as to Fowler's identity he spoke to his pilot who banked and returned to the business of observing. Fowler flew near the observation plane and waved to the two men. Then he climbed sharply to get above the clouds to see how things were upstairs. If the killer was in the vicinity he should have spotted the observation plane, also.

At first Fowler saw nothing. And

then off to the east he saw another plane. It skimmed the upper surface of the clouds which partly enveloped the plane so that Fowler couldn't identify it. He thought it was another Spad. The plane dove through a hole in the clouds in the general direction of the D. H. and Fowler nosed over in apprehension.

Fowler flattened out beneath the clouds and looked about. There was the other plane, flying lazily away from the D. H. It was another Spad. Fowler thought it might be from the 13th. Possibly it was Rusty, he concluded. Rusty had a weakness for this sector ever since a forced landing had almost literally tossed him into the lap of a French countess. He opened the throttle a bit and droned after the other Spad. Casually the other plane altered its course by banking and from the distance of a quarter of a mile or so the other pilot waved a friendly greeting to Dit. He waved back. No, it was not Rusty, or any one of the gang. This pilot had his bus dolled up to suit his individual taste. The whole cowling was striped with red and black paint.

"That guy must have been a barber in civil life," reflected Dit with a grin. He watched the Spad. It circled the D. H. and the pilot waved a friendly greeting. The D. H. men waved back. The pair felt secure with two Spads playing about them with concentric tri-color insignia plainly visible on the fuselages. Dit and the other Spad circled about the observer for a few moments and then Dit climbed above the clouds for another looksee.

Dit found no sign of enemy plane above the clouds and he dropped down through the filmy mass again. He pulled out and looked for the D. H.—

"Good God!"



DIT'S startled eyes made out the D. H. dropping earthward in a helpless tail-spin while the ominous black and oily wake of a flamer spread out behind it. And above it, darting about wildly, was the other Spad. The

Spad flew towards Dit. The pilot pointed down at the falling D.H. and then threw his hands up in a hopeless gesture and banked away.

What had brought the D. H. down? Dit's frantic eyes swept the horizon and searched above and below. No other plane in sight but the other Spad. Strange the pilot hadn't seen how the D. H. was shot down. He must have been in plain sight of the whole thing. Dit had been above the clouds—out of sight for scarcely a minute. But in that minute...

The other pilot wanted to tell him something. Dit looked over his shoulder and slowed down to let him come up close. The other Spad approached swiftly. Dit noted that he wore large goggles. They hid the greater part of his face, like a mask.

Dit gasped again in astonishment.

Before his eyes Spad insignias of the tri-colored circles vanished and in their places flashed the black Maltese crosses of the enemy. At the same instant the trailing plane cut in sharply and a withering burst of fire flamed from its guns but a few yards away from Dit's back.

Instinctively Dit had shoved his stick and kicked the rudder. This spontaneous act preserved his life—at least for the instant. A burst of bullets thudded into Dit's ship and barely missed drilling through his body. They ripped through the fuselage behind him and must have cut the control wires, for the stick went limp in Dit's hand. The plane nosed into a dive.

The other Spad, now flying its true colors, climbed on Dit's tail and followed down, its Spandau or Vickers bullets searing the air about him. The bullets ripped into his tail assemblage and further crippled his controls. Dit, trying to keep out of a spin and, if possible, fight back, was fighting desperately to control the plane on ailerons with some assistance of his rudder.

Down he plunged, with the speed of his descent ripping at his wings and straining his wires until they shrieked in protest. Bullets from the other Spad

followed him, but Dit's wobbly dive made aim uncertain. The earth rushed up to meet him. In a quick glimpse of the terrain Dit managed to snatch he saw that he had crossed the lines and was plunging down on the German support trenches. For an instant the plane came out of its dive and then fell off again. It was spinning now. A sense of helpless rage rather than fear of the imminent death possessed Dit. This was the trick that had sent Bob to his death, he knew now. The unscrupulous killer flew an Allied plane and under Allied colors and flashed his true colors in the final moment before his kill. And now Dit was going out the same way Bob had gone. Spinning to his death.

The Spad swerved drunkenly and with a lurch pulled itself out of the spin. The blood pounded in Dit's head and blinded him. He didn't know whether he was upside down or horizontal with the earth. He caught a glimpse of the land below—a few hundred feet away. The plane was slipping. He shoved the stick to the right, then to the left. It yawed like a wind-tossed kite and then dipped, but its plunge was cut to a landing speed.

The Spad hit the rough ground in a passably good three point landing and bounded along, rolled to a communication trench and then turned tail up and stuck. Dit released his belt and fell out.

He was badly shaken up and bruised, but as far as he could ascertain he wasn't injured seriously. He heard a growling of guttural voices. Several coal scuttle helmets protruded above the trench and arms reached up. He was unceremoniously yanked down into the trench while other Germans pounced on the Spad and began to tear it to pieces. Souvenir hunting. He smiled ruefully. Soldiers were very much alike on both sides of the front.

AN OFFICER rounded a bend in the trench and barked a sharp order that brought the soldiers to an instant salute. He seemed more concerned with the improper tactics of the souvenir hunt-

ers than with Dit. He lacerated them with a swift flow of abuse and then turned scowling to Dit whose arms were held pinioned by two soldiers.

"*Sprechen sie Deutsch?*"

Dit had taken German two years in high school and in the two years of the college course the war had interrupted. However, he didn't consider himself a German conversationalist and he decided that a profession of ignorance would be more expedient. He shook his head in negation.

"I don't speak der English goot," stated the officer.

He approached and took Dit's Colt and directed the two soldiers holding Dit to bring him to *der Hauptmann*. Dit understood that.

Dit was conducted down a trench and into an officers' dugout, a well fitted concrete structure with real beds in it, probably "borrowed" from some chateau. There were several officers who viewed Dit with interest, but with a manifest air of superiority. *Der Hauptmann* spoke fairly good English. He examined Dit's effects and read a letter from Dit's mother. Dit knew, however, that the letter contained nothing of value for the German.

"You are Lieutenant Charles Fowler, yah?"

"Yes."

"I will ask you some questions——"

"You will only be wasting your time," interrupted Dit. "You can't expect me to give you any military information."

"So?" said the *Hauptmann*. "Vell, dere ist not much that an aviator can tell us. What you know ist best for der Imperial Air Force. Maybe for them you will talk." He spoke in German to the two soldiers who had escorted Dit. The latter gathered enough of the conversation to make out that the soldiers were identifying the plane that had shot him down. *Der Hauptmann* turned back to Dit.

"I am sending you to the *jagdstaffel* where is the man who proved himself a better aviator than you."

Dit flushed in anger. He had it on the

tip of his tongue to give his opinion of the killer who resorted to the deceptive tricks that had brought down himself, and Bob. But he checked his words. He was being given the chance, perhaps, to meet face to face the murderer of Bob. And when he did—well, he still lived. Someway to square accounts should present itself.

Under guard, walking and accepting whatever means of transportation the guards could hail, Dit traveled several kilometers to the German *jagdstaffel* that included among its members the man who shot him down. Dit had seen captured German fliers treated royally by his comrades and he had been given to understand something of the same treatment was afforded to Allied aviators brought down behind the German lines. Nor was he mistaken. The officious *jagdstaffel* commander made a stern and serious effort to squeeze military information out of Dit, but desisted good naturedly when he found himself balked. Several German fliers, most of them about his own age, took possession of him. They treated him as a guest, offered him Pilsner or his choice of liquors and wine.

"Drink while you can," smiled one of the officers who had introduced himself and his comrades, adding in each case the number of air victories, if any. "In a little while you will be on your way to the prison for the duration of the war. And at the prison they do not serve good Pilsner."

He spoke good English, was tall and not unpleasant looking despite his shaven head and a saber scar on his cheek. He had introduced himself as von Obert.



BUT DIT wanted to keep a clear head and he had no desire to drink with the man who had shot him down. He searched the circle of German faces for the man.

"Is the one who shot me down here?" he asked of von Obert.

"No. He is gone up again. It iss a

good day for his work. You like the work of Karl Kundel—yah?"

"If that is his name," stated Dit boldly, "I like neither him nor the despicable manner in which he gains his victories."

"Hmm, it iss war," grunted von Obert, "and all iss fair in war, and war iss what your famous general called it—hell. Perhaps you have heard of our submarines. They must sink ships. But we are humanitarian enough not to take lives unnecessarily. The submarine it comes to the surface to give time for boats to be lowered and what happens? The sides of the innocent merchantman drop down, the flag of the neutral is quickly replaced by the Union Jack and guns sink the unfortunate U-boat. That is Kundel's argument when he releases the spring that changes the insignia of the Allies to that of the Germans."

"Well, we American fliers," insisted Dit brazenly, "take a more sportsman-like attitude toward the war."

Von Obert frowned. "We, too, prefer to be sportsmen. That iss why none of us"—he included the group—"would like to fly like Kundel. But the war to him is not a sport. It is the business of killing, and Kundel is the killer, the cold-blooded machine. Then he takes great chances flying alone for he is the target also of our guns and planes—though instructions are given not to attack the Spad with the red and black nose."

A German standing near the door spoke to von Obert.

"Kundel has landed," stated von Obert. "You will have your chance to meet him."

A few minutes later a middle aged man in flying clothes entered the room. He was a big man, and while most of the pilots were blond he was swarthy with black hair and a black Mephistophelian beard. His eyes were black and piercing.

"Kundel, the devil," smiled von Obert to Dit. Then von Obert spoke to Kundel, explaining who Dit was. Kundel glared

at Dit as if he would finish the killing process he had failed to complete. He uttered not a word and passed on into another room leaving Dit with a sense of diabolical dread. Here in Kundel was the hate of war personified.

Soon after Kundel left, messengers came from the commander.

"You are on the way to prison," von Obert explained to Dit, "and with food and the necessities of life not so abundant with us, prison will not be so pleasant. You will join us in one last drink."

Orderlies filled the large beer steins and Dit lifted his with the Germans.

"To our involuntary guest," toasted von Obert, "may he enjoy the hospitality of the Fatherland."

Steins were raised and drained.

"And," concluded von Obert as he set his empty stein down on the table, "should you escape may we meet again—in the air."

"If I escape," stated Dit in a manner that left no doubt as to his intention to do so if possible, "there is one man I want to meet in the air."

"You are not likely to escape. It is a convenient explanation for many deaths, if prisoners attempt to escape."

Dit glanced in surprise toward the door. Kundel had entered. He now effected a military cape, similar to that Dit had seen in pictures of the Kaiser. Draped close about his neck like a toga the man looked more like Mephistopheles than ever. His eyes as they fastened upon Dit flamed with stark hate. So he spoke English.

"How Kundel loves you," chided von Obert. "Well, my friend, your guards are waiting."

DIT WAS led back to the commander's quarters. Outside it he saw a car and in the car two German non-commissioned officers. They were hard looking tickets. Members of some shock troops company, thought Dit.

Dit was brought into the commander's quarters and kept waiting while commitment papers or whatever forms were

necessary were being attested to and then he was led out to the car again. As he came out he saw the two non-coms in earnest conversation with Kundel. The conversation ceased abruptly. The non-coms saluted and Kundel glared piercingly at Dit and then walked stiffly away.

Dit was unceremoniously bundled into the front seat beside the chauffeur. The other non-com climbed in the rear seat and Dit started on his way towards the prison camp. After the war this was to be the set up for undesirables "taken for a ride". Dit had forebodings along this line. What was it that Kundel had said about trying to escape furnishing a convenient explanation for prisoners dying?

"Sprechen sie Deutsch?"

The chauffeur asked Dit that. Dit looked at him blankly. Professed ignorance of German might come in handy here. The two non-coms carried on a conversation. Dit made out that they were talking about his watch and his ring, a ruby. It was a present from his mother on his last birthday. The two non-coms were arguing over his watch and ring. Both wanted the ring. Dit gave no sign of understanding, but he was working his knowledge of German overtime.

Now they were arguing over where they would dispose of him. The chauffeur spoke of a wooded road near Sergy and the nearby swampy land. They agreed on this. Dit listened to the arrangements for his death as the car speeded on. The pair passed a flask back and forth. It smelled like *kimmel* to Dit. The men became more loquacious as the liquor took effect. The chauffeur speeded up the car. It swerved dangerously along the road and Dit began to fear that the fatality would occur before the scheduled time and place. He knew that bit of road and swamp near Sergy. He had flown over it. The chauffeur offered him a drink. Dit felt that it would serve his purpose if he made the men think he had absolutely no suspicions of what they planned for him. The fear of an automobile accident

had given him an idea. He took the drink.

The men continued to drink and show the effects. The car zig-zagged drunkenly. Dit made several gestures toward the wheel as if to guide it. This amused the chauffeur. He swerved all over the road.

They drew near to the appointed spot. Dit recognized the landmarks. The chauffeur told the man behind to get his gun ready. So he was to be shot in the back. Kundel's tactics. Trees lined the road. The car swerved. Dit put out his hand towards the wheel. But this time it wasn't a feint. He seized the wheel with his left hand and twisted it away from him. At the same time he forced open the door.

The chauffeur yelled and tried to swing the car, but Dit held firmly as the auto raced for a tree at high speed. The car left the road and then Dit leaped. The momentum hurled him through the air. He heard an explosive crash as the car crashed head on into the tree. Dit struck the spongy soil on his shoulder and rolled like a professional tumbler. Even so he was badly dazed and it was some time before he could climb to his feet.

The car was a smoking tangle of junk. The chauffeur was crushed in the front seat. At first Dit couldn't find the other non-com but came upon him thirty feet or more from the car where he had been catapulted. If he wasn't dead he was the next thing to it. Dit placed his ear to the man's heart and heard no beating. Quickly Dit stripped off his own and the dead sergeant's uniform and put on the German's.



DIT started down the road in the general direction of the lines. He must be twenty or more kilometers from the front he decided. The time was well along into the afternoon and if he kept on he should reach the woods near Chatillon after dark. In his German

uniform he might work his way through where the lines were thin.

Dit kept near to the woods, but finally came to an open stretch of road bordered by fields on both sides. He dreaded plodding along in the open but he had no alternative save to wait until it was dark, and he wanted to be further along before darkness enveloped. He heard the rumble of a camion behind him. Too late to seek concealment now. He plodded on in assumed nonchalance.

The truck drew up behind him and came to a grinding stop. Two soldiers on the seat invited Dit to hop aboard. Dit didn't have faith enough in his conversational German to risk riding with them. Despite their protests he hopped on the rear of the truck and refused to take a seat with them. The truck proceeded toward the front.

Signs of the front appeared; barracks, soldiers in reserve. Soldiers in columns, so thick that the truck had to make detours. Strange, thought Dit, that there should be so many soldiers this far back of the front. Probably they were coming out for a well deserved rest. No, they were too fresh appearing. Going in then.

He heard the drone of motors overhead and looked up. Planes—German planes. There was a flight overhead, another off to the left, another beyond that. Jerry certainly had his birdmen out this evening.

The truck bounded out of the rough detour. More troops. Batteries stirring into life as dusk settled upon them. The booming of cannon grew louder. An occasional long range shell exploded on the road ahead. The truck moved slowly. Time to strike into the woods, decided Dit.

Three hours later he was still in the woods. Guided by the noise of monotonous cannonading Dit held true to a general direction to the front, yet three hours and more found him still in the woods. Sometimes he found paths, but when he did he invariably heard soldiers talking and moving about. They seemed

to be as thick as the underbrush itself. He moved cautiously and no one challenged him.

Finally the flashing glowed brightly ahead. There were no trees between him and the flashing of the guns and the glare of star shells. He was looking down a small wood road into No-man's land. But the road was heavily barricaded with wire entanglements and guarded with strong machine gun nests. He spent the better part of another anxious hour working around these nests and reaching the barbed wire. Then he crawled along the edge of the wire searching for an opening. He didn't dare stand up, because of the star shells. Even though he wore a German uniform he would be questioned if discovered. He could find no opening. He was trapped. Kundel had him licked. Kundel would continue to plague the Allied aviators. Dit's brother would be unavenged. He heard voices.

Dit had been hearing voices for hours, but now he detected a difference. The voices sounded more cultured, than the clatter of the woods. The speakers must be officers. Dit could understand their German.

"We will have many prisoners tonight, *Herr Oberst.*"

"Yes, Emile."

"What time is the attack?"

"At three nine."

"Luck in threes, *Herr Oberst.*"

"Yes, the men are now cutting the wires."

"Attack?" reflected Dit. Those men in the woods, artillery moving, that concentration of planes—he had been dumb not to have guessed. Did they know across the lines? He could tell them. He must get through.

No longer discouraged, Dit moved along the wire. He heard more voices, the clink of wire being cut. Here was a chance to be taken for a wire cutter. He crawled to where a squad was working. Then as they moved away he slipped through.

NOW began the perilous crawling passage across No-man's land. Bursting star shells forced him to hug the muddy, stinking ground; the chatter of machine guns drove him into shell holes. The Boche wanted no raiding party to discover the preparations for the surprise attack.

"Who's there?"

Thank God—Yanks.

"A friend," he called.

"Oh, yeah? Hey, Slim, get the Sarge—they're comin' through."

"I'm an escaped prisoner," called Dit.

"Says you. Come in careful if you're on the level, buddy, an' don't try no monkey bizness or I'll drill you."

Dit crawled into the machine gun outpost and was frisked and hurried back to the front line trench to the officer of the day. He was relayed to the captain, the regimental P. C. and finally the divisional P. C., repeating each time the story of his escape and the warning of the attack. At the divisional P. C., General Cranston, a grizzled old war dog, got in touch with Harding by phone and confirmed Dit's story to his satisfaction.

"Three nine, you say," grunted the general. "It won't be long before the barrage, but we still got our phone wires intact."

Hell broke loose that night and Dit had a grand stand seat. The Boche barrage bursting out of a comparatively clear sky failed to disorganize the Yanks. A withering counter barrage fell on the Germans as they poured out of the trenches. Those who crossed this stretch of hell found lines of Yankee bayonets set to meet them. Attacks brought counter attacks and bitter, sanguinary fighting, but the Germans had been deprived of the essential element of surprise and daylight found the Americans in full possession of their own possessions. General Cranston paused long enough to send for Dit.

"Lieutenant, you rendered valuable service. I shall see that you are cited."

"Thank you, General," declared Dit.

"But I shall be more indebted to you if you can arrange transportation for me to my drome. I have a job that I'd like to finish before it's too late."

An hour or so later Dit was in a borrowed Spad, flying towards his drome. He flew east along the front. Far below him the artillery kept up its pounding. Dit felt at peace now. He lived. He flew again. And he knew the scret of Kundel—a Spad with a black and red cowling.

Off to the northeast a two-seater circled. It would be directing artillery fire. A Spad flew in lazy circles near it. Dit's heart jumped. The other Spad was too far away for him to identify it. It might be protection for the two-seater—it might be Kundel.

Dit swung his nose and gave the bus the gun. He warmed his Vickers. Yes, all was in order in this Spad. He drew up on the two planes and became casual. He waved to the men in the two-seater and flew slowly after the other Spad. It turned. The black and red nose! Dit's heart leaped.

Dit drew up on him. He could see Kundel and recognize him by his Mephistophelian goatee. Here was a chance to shoot Kundel down from behind—the way Kundel got his victims. But Dit didn't want to get him that way. He wanted Kundel to know. Kundel waved. Dit drew nearer. Abreast of him now, Dit rose in the cockpit and removed his goggles. Let Kundel recognize him now. Kundel did. His lower jaw dropped in surprise.



DIT snapped back his goggles and pulled back into a sharp vertical and then swooped over for a burst at Kundel. But Kundel kicked out of the line of fire and received nothing more than a few perforations near the tail. But Dit rode him. He didn't expect immediate victory. He didn't want it. He wished to play with Kundel as a cat does with a mouse. Again he rode Kundel's tail and sent his tracers through his

wings. He heard a chatter of machine guns. Bullets tore through his own wings. Dit looked back. The two-seater was firing on *him*.

Well, why not? He had attacked a Spad, even though he flew one himself. He even wore a German uniform beneath his borrowed flying togs although they couldn't see that. But they had had taken him for a German. What an irony of fate when he was destroying the killer who was planning to down this same two-seater as he had done so many of its fellows!

Kundel realized the situation and kept close to the two-seater. Archie burst below. American anti-aircraft shells—and firing at him. More bullets through his wings. That two-seater was dangerous. He'd have to get Kundel quickly.

He crowded Kundel and dove for him again. Bullets thudded against Dit's instrument board and he kicked out to save his life.

Damn that two-seater. He glanced over his shoulder. It wasn't the two-seater. Another Spad rode his tail, and there was another, and another and a fourth. They converged on him. Kundel, the D. H. and now four Spads, only Kundel knowing him for an American; the others striving to shoot him down for a German in a stolen plane. He caught a glimpse of Kundel's mocking leer. He pulled into a sharp vertical as a Spad shot by. Dit got a glimpse of another face—Spike, and those others would be Rusty, Sleepy, Blondy—his buddies, striving to kill him, to shoot him down in flames, not knowing him.

He couldn't escape that quartette. Frantically he tried to make them recognize him, but if he relinquished the controls for an instant, bullets riddled his plane. It would be only a question of moments now, seconds. Vickers blazed at him from all angles, ripped and tore through wings and fuselage, rattled off his cowling, thudded against his instruments, showered him with splinters as sharp as flying razor blades—and all the time Kundel mocking him, leering at

him, hanging about in hopes of getting in the death blow himself.

Damn it, if he had to go he'd take Kundel with him. They'd drop behind the American lines and then Spike, and Rusty and the others would know the truth, that they hadn't killed a buddy in vain. Dit banked as sharply as his battered bus would permit and charged head on for Kundel. Too late the latter divined Dit's motive. He sought to dive under, but there wasn't room. Dit's undercarriage struck Kundel's upper wing with a sickening crash. Dit's prop sliced through the tail like a buzz saw and broke. The two planes appeared to halt in the air and then fell apart.

Dit felt himself plunging down. This was the end. The plane would break up in a second. But it didn't. With battered lower wing trailing, the Spad wobbled down like a broken kite, now spinning, now swooping up, now slipping wildly like a stricken bird. The ground rushed up to meet Dit. Trees, mud. Another swoop. He hung suspended in the air. He dropped again. A crash and branches all about him. A thud, a bath of mud and then blackness.

DIT'S eyes opened. A smell of disinfectants. The cold walls of a dug-out.

"His eyes are open, Spike,"

"Dit." Spike was bending over him, his face anxious. "You'll pull through, kid. The Doc says you would if you woke up. Kid, we didn't bump you off." What a look of relief on Spike's homely face! Dit smiled weakly.

"But, kid," asked Rusty, "what was the idea of jammin' with another Spad that was givin' protection to the two-seater?"

"Protection? He was going to shoot it down. That's how he got those other two-seaters. That's how he got—my brother. Did I get him?"

"Get him?" exploded Spike. "Say, he shot so far into the mud they won't have to dig a grave for him. You high-spaded that baby—plenty."



The FUNK HOLE



Wherein readers of BATTLE STORIES have an opportunity to sound off. * * *
The remarks are by the C.O.'s Dog-robber

READER LIKES BETHEL

HERE'S a buddy from the great open spaces who knows a good yarn when he sees one, and doesn't hesitate to sound off about it.

I am getting so I like BATTLE STORIES better all the time. I always enjoy all the the regular writers, but I like to see a new one occasionally. Hence I was especially interested in Captain Bethel's "In Enemy Waters". Seems as though we ought to see more of him—and of Hardy and Tweldon.

James M. Moore,
Bozeman, Montana.

The Dog-robber is going to give Mr. Moore some fast service on his request. In the January issue of BATTLE STORIES we are publishing another thrilling Bethel yarn in which Hardy and Tweldon take part in the storming of the Mole at Zeebrugge.

LOST: ONE BUDDY

THE Dog-robber is always glad to lend a helping hand to a buddy in distress. Here's a BATTLE STORIES fan who wants to get in touch with a war-time pal.

As an old reader of BATTLE STORIES I would like to get in touch with Frank T. Finlon, formerly of Johnstown, Pa. We saw service together in the 32nd Division.

A. D. Hunkins,
859 Tacken St.,
Flint, Mich.

The Dog-robber is happy to act as a clearing post for information of this kind, but he'll have to turn this question over to the BATTLE STORIES gang. If any of you former 32nd Division doughs know anything about Mr. Finlon's whereabouts, drop a line to his buddy.

TRADING POST GOES STRONG

HOW many of you foot-sloggers have feasted your glims on the Trading Post, that scene of frenzied activities where the bucks are getting together to swap war relics? It is certainly a lively

department and gives promise of jumping from one page to several. We'll tend to that, however. Just send in the list of relics you want to trade or sell and we will see that they get in the magazine if we have to add another hundred pages.

Many and varied are the relics that the boys want to swap and they range from medals to—believe it or not—a machine gun. You'll find that implement of Chicago warfare listed at the top of the column in this month's collection.

Just a word of caution before you grab your pen to trade off some duplicates in your collection or make additions—if you see something you want for your collection please write direct to the party with the relic for sale or trade. The addresses are published with each list.

MORE EMPEY STORIES

ANOTHER BATTLE STORIES fan makes his bow to the funkhole tribe with a bouquet for Arthur Guy Empey and a slap on the back for the Dog-robber.

This is my first trip to this outfit and as I'm a modest guy I won't brag, but I will admit that when it comes to picking a good magazine I'm not so bad. I sure hit it right when I first bought BATTLE STORIES. To date, my favorite author is Arthur Guy Empey.

Ed Norcutt,
822 West 68 St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Maybe we're prejudiced, but we're inclined to agree with Mr. Norcutt that BATTLE STORIES is the best war mag on the market. Which should make it unanimous. We're glad to announce for you Empey fans that your favorite author has several smashing front-line novelets under way, the first of which, "Seven Doughty Doughs" will appear in the January issue of BATTLE STORIES, on sale December 10.

PAINTON SERIAL COMING

JOSEPH KERLIN, a buddy from Pennsylvania, unloads some bouquets and brickbats on the **BATTLE STORIES** parapet and gives us the low-down on his likes and dislikes.

BATTLE STORIES is one of my favorite magazines. All of the stories are fine and I like them very much. I also liked those war pictures you ran in **BATTLE STORIES** from time to time a while ago, but if you want the mag to be a success cut out the serials. Give us lots of stories by Frederick C. Painton.

Joseph Kerlin,
210 Liberty St.,
Watsontown, Penn.

The Dog-robber has been considering the reinstalment of the War Album for some time and we hope to make this department a feature of **BATTLE STORIES** once more in the very near future. As far as the serials are concerned, we think that Mr. Kerlin will revise his opinion of them when he reads the corking instalment of the new serial "Spy X-44" which Mr. Painton has in this issue. This gripping yarn is the finest work of Mr. Painton's writing career.

WANTS VERDUN MEDAL

HERE'S a former non-com who has evidently seen beaucoup action and wants to know how to go about adding another decoration to his long string of medals.

Having slogged along French, Belgian and German roads in the mud—mostly at night—and being a faithful reader of your dandy **BATTLE STORIES** magazine, I am going to ask you a favor. Will you please publish the address in the city of Verdun, France where I can obtain the medal for the defense of that city. Buddy, I want that decoration to complete my string of medals, which will be twelve. Also, if it isn't too much trouble, please publish again the poem to the American dead, "In Flanders Fields".

George Deane,
1st. Sgt. U. S. Army, Rtd.
2507 Scoville Ave.,
Suite 2,
Cleveland, Ohio.

The Dog-robber's tin derby is off to ex-sergeant Deane, and here's hoping he gets the coveted decoration. We would suggest that he present his case to his Legion post. They will take the matter up with the War Department and see

that the request is routed through the proper channels.

ABOUT THE FIDAC

HERE'S a buddy who wants to know something about the Fidac, the world-wide organization which came into being as a result of the World war.

I have been reading **BATTLE STORIES** for some time and think it is one of the best war mags on the market. I wonder if you could help me out and give me a little dope on the Fidac, an outfit which I see mentioned in the papers every so often. What does the name stand for; and what is it—a war organization, or what?

Vernon Olson,
Los Angeles, Cal.

Fidac is the contracted name of the *Federation Inter-alliee des Anciens Combattants*, an association of veterans' societies of the Allied countries in the World war. The American Legion is the United States member. The aims of the organization are embodied in the foreword to the Fidac constitution adopted in New Orleans in 1922, a peace charter signed by the representatives of ex-service men of nine Allied nations. The foreword reads as follows: "The principal object of the Fidac is to maintain, foster and develop that spirit of comradeship which manifested itself on the battle fields of the World war and to use that comradeship in the cause of peace..." Although not a pacifist organization, sections of the famous Fidac peace charter have been written into almost every international peace and arbitration treaty drafted and approved.

BOUQUET FOR BATTLE STORIES

JUST about the time the Dog-robber gets comfortably stretched out in his chicken wire bunk and begins to view the rosy old world through a haze of cigarette smoke, somebody heaves a bomb into the dugout and the war is on once more. Here's a former skipper who has a few things to say about **BATTLE STORIES** and doesn't mince words in saying them.

Just a word of commendation for **BATTLE STORIES**, which I think is the best war magazine I have read. The stories by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson and Empey are fine.

(Continued on page 178)



THE TRADING POST

Where the C. O.'s Dog-robber superintends the swapping of war relics. Articles picked up on the battle fields, German and Allied trinkets of all kinds, may be sold or exchanged in these columns. Send in your list of what you want to obtain or swap and it will be printed without charge. Please correspond directly with the party who has articles to trade.

ONCE or twice during the past month this old detail-dodger was tempted to yell "Kamerad" when the company clerk staggered down the funk hole steps with another batch of swap letters, but the souvenir war is still on with new fronts being heard from every day. Slip us your list of what you want to swap or buy and we'll tell the gang about it. There are no strings on this offer—only remember that if you see an article listed that you'd like to have, correspond directly with the owner. The latest results of the souvenir barrage are listed below:

Well, gang, here's the first one on the list; and if this doesn't knock you for a row of G. I. cans may I never live to spit in another mess kit. Arthur Ruoff, 170-14 Liberty Ave., Jamaica, N. Y., heads his consignment with "one machine gun in good order". He doesn't say what kind it is, but in the right hands it should get the boys in Chicago out of the trenches by Christmas. He also has a French rifle and bayonet dated 1869, an engraved French cavalry sword dated 1822, a German coal-scuttle helmet and a German officer's spiked helmet. He will swap any item on the list for a German Luger or any other small arms.

* * *

Robert Wall, 1642 St. Luke St., Augusta, Ga., is in the market for both French and German hand grenades.

* * *

One airplane propeller, one Spanish-American war shell, one U. S. mess kit, 100 war pictures, twenty-five issues of BATTLE STORIES, one trench knife and case and one officers' hat comprise the list of W. E. Magnolia, 423 Beach 135 St., Belle Harbor, Long Island. He is looking for other war pictures, bayonets, a Springfield rifle and bayonet and a Luger or .45 Colt automatic.

* * *

Adolph Bergman, a young BATTLE STORIES fan is looking for inexpensive war souvenirs of any kind. Address him at 614 West 157 St., New York, N. Y.

* * *

"I have about 300 magazines, war, air, sea, detective or gangster," writes Joseph Vogt, 149 Wright St., Oshkosh, Wis. He will swap 200 magazines for a .22 rifle, single shot or repeater, or will swap other mags for helmets, canteens,

mess kits, aviation insignia, medals, etc. He also has a German helmet to trade or sell.

* * *

Paul Adams, 202 Wood Ave., Tottenville, S. I., N. Y., lists various World war newspaper clippings, a German wound medal, a Hussar's death's head, various collar devices, a Prussian star, (worn by the Kaiser's staff officers), and a U. S. trench knife. He will swap any of the items for firearms of any description, or any two of the articles for a German Luger.

* * *

A German or American camouflaged helmet (preferably German) is wanted by G. K. Mastbaum, 90 Orleans Ave., Battle Creek, Mich. He is also in the market for a French, Belgian or Italian helmet and a German saw-toothed bayonet.

* * *

R. F. Belke, 316 Fremont St., Kiel, Wis., has a complete set of airplane war photos. These include such famous ships as Spads, Fokkers, Nieuports and Albatros as well as the lesser known planes such as Lapiers, Hanovers, Morane 27's and Henriot Duponts.

* * *

Arthur Davidson, 59 Gatling Place, Brooklyn, N. Y., will swap a U. S. helmet for twenty war pictures taken in France, or any kind of a Heinie iron hat; one photographic history of the war for any small side arm; one regulation bayonet, scabbard and belt for a German trench knife or pot helmet.

* * *

E. F. Coffin, 480 Parker St., Newton Centre, Mass., will pay ten cents each for ordinary World war newspapers, and twenty cents each for Sunday editions. He makes the proviso that they must contain at least eight articles dealing with the war. He would also like to buy war relics of all kinds.

* * *

Buddies with war pictures to sell should get in touch with Mrs. C. M. Crabtree, Box 780, Plant City, Fla.

* * *

John Maher, 306 East 142 St., New York, N. Y., has an American tin helmet which he will swap for a German or American trench knife, 100 war photos or parts of planes shot down in combat, with definite markings. He will sell a .45 Colt automatic holster, cartridge belt and leg strap for \$2.00 or will trade for a spiked German helmet.

* * *

"I would like to have a cross or Allied circles from planes shot down during the World war, as well as squadron markings and other

\$2750.00 REWARD
Help Pick A Movie Star

In this picture are 14 girls. All want to be a movie star. One, and only one, girl can be selected from this group—she is different from all the other girls. Can you pick her out? Just say, "I pick No. — to play in the movies."—then rush that number to me at once.

SOME HELPS The difference in the girls may be in the features, the hair dress or general style. Look very carefully. One girl is entirely different from all the others. If you can find the girl that is different from all the others, be sure to send the number under her picture to me right away. Do it at once. Send by first mail. You may become the winner of a Straight 8 Buick 4-door Sedan fully equipped or \$1750.00 cash money—without one cent of cost to you. I will give away, five new 4-door Sedans—or the winners can have cash money instead of the automobiles if they prefer. Twenty big prizes will be given—a total of \$7750.00 in cash.

WIN NEW BUICK OR \$1750.00 CASH
 Your choice of this Beautiful Buick 4-door Sedan or \$1750.00 cash will be given. We even pay the freight, fill the tank with gasoline and deliver the car from your nearest Buick dealer. This is an exceptional opportunity. Act quick. Because, I will also give

\$1000.00 CASH EXTRA FOR BEING PROMPT
 I will pay \$1000.00 cash extra just for being on time. Duplicate prizes will be paid in case of ties. Send quick and you will be immediately qualified for an opportunity to win Buick or \$1750.00 and \$1000.00 extra for being prompt or \$2750.00 cash money. You can't lose. Anyone who takes full advantage of this opportunity will be rewarded. But, hurry. Find the girl that you think will make the best movie star. Rush the number under her picture with your name and address, to me. Do it today. Send a post card or letter. Just say, "Girl No. — is the one I pick to play in the movies." "Tell me how I can get this wonderful new Buick car or \$2750.00 cash money, without obligation or one penny of cost to me."

F. E. DUANE, 540 PLYMOUTH CT., DEPT. 150, CHICAGO, ILL.

war or aviation articles," writes Carl Pugliese, 1218 Boston Road, New York, N. Y.

* * *

James F. Schwenk, 219 East 89 St., New York, N. Y., has a complete set of BATTLE STORIES in good condition dating back to October 1928 which he will swap for a pair of field glasses.

* * *

Roger Leitch, 9410 214 Place, Queens Village, N. Y., will swap an 1892 Winchester for any World war article taken from the Germans.

* * *

"Please get me in touch with any one who wants to sell French, British, German or American medals or service bars," writes Ed Stock of 2151 Harper, Detroit, Mich.

* * *

R. I. Shank, 61 East Avenue, Hagerstown, Md., is in the market for a German spiked helmet.

* * *

M. C. Kirkwood of Rouseville, Pa., will swap a 9 m.m. Luger with an eight inch barrel and

800 yard adjustable sights for a pair of field glasses or anything else of interest.

* * *

Louis Limberg, 339 Vernon Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y., wants to buy almost any kind of war relic.

* * *

War books in general, those dealing with war from the German angle and records and information about our flying aces may be obtained from Leroy Caffey, R. F. D. 10, Box 529, Springfield, Mo.

I POSITIVELY GUARANTEE

to increase your arms one-half inch in size, chest one full inch, strength 25%, health 100% in one week's time, by following my instructions and using my exerciser 10 minutes mornings and at night. Send \$1 for complete course and exercisers. Satisfaction guaranteed or \$1 refunded.

PROF. J. A. DRYER
 Box 1850-Z Chicago, Ill.

RUPTURE IS NOT A TEAR

NO BREAK TO HEAL

Rupture is not a tear, but is due to a muscular weakness in the abdominal wall. Trusses merely brace these muscles but do not strengthen them—on the contrary, the gouging of the ordinary truss pad often increases this weakness as it tends to shut off circulation of the blood.

STUART'S ADHESIF PLAPAO-PADS are patentably different—being mechanico-chemico applicators—made self-adhesive purposely to keep the muscle-tonic called "Plapao" continuously applied to the affected parts, and to minimize danger of slipping and painful friction. The adhesive fabric is soft as velvet and clings to the body without straps, buckles or springs. Easy to apply—comfortable—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal, Rome, Grand Prix, Paris, Honorable Mention, Panama Pacific Exposition, San Francisco, etc. For almost a quarter century stacks of sworn testimonials from many different countries report success—without delay from work. The epidermatic absorption of Plapao utilizing "mechanico-chemico therapy" tends toward a natural process of recovery, after which no further use for a truss.

Stop wasting your time and money on old-fashioned devices. Learn how to close the hernial opening as nature intended, so the rupture can't come down. Send no money; just mail the Free Test coupon below. For your own good—write today—tomorrow may be too late.

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Send me a Free 10 day test supply of the remedial factor Plapao and 48-page illustrated book on Rupture; no charge for this now or later.

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POSITIONS on Ocean Liners—Experience unnecessary; Good pay; List of positions free. 292-E, Mount Vernon, New York.

(Continued from page 175)

I liked "Maxim Silencers" by Harold F. Cruickshank as far as portrayal of characters and human action goes but I think he takes too many liberties in the military setting. A Stokes gun eighty yards in front of the forward line might possibly have happened elsewhere, but not at Canal du Nord. I was in command of one of the forward battalions in the Canal du Nord show and perhaps the following explanation of my comment might be of interest.

My battalion posts were in some cases within twenty yards of the German posts. A Stokes gun even close to the forward line would have been shooting straight up in the air. The Canal du Nord on the Canadian front was dry and for the most part was an embanked canal consisting of two great walls of masonry through which the Germans had cut roads at intervals in the previous retirement. The idea of the pontoon in "Maxim Silencers" therefore seems unnecessary.

Dismounted cavalry held the front opposite us, 4th and 5th Uhlans and Dragoon Garde regiments. We captured a party of ten including an officer. They surrendered promptly, and every one seemed happy except the officer. Some one had hit him over the head with a pick handle, and of course he was rather annoyed.

As a professional writer, though not of war stories, I would like to see yarns such as the Canal du Nord attack and other similar stories in such magazines as yours.

R. D. Davies,
Late O. C., 44th Can. Inf. Batt.
1841 Prince St.,
Berkeley, Cal.

The Dog-robber is right proud to welcome the ex-skipper of the 44th to the BATTLE STORIES funkhole. We like a chap who doesn't hesitate to sound off about something he doesn't like. Now, about that Cruickshank yarn: We aim to make BATTLE STORIES the best war magazine on the market, as authentic, historically and technically, as possible. Sometimes the Dog-robber's memory mechanisms slip a cog and he makes an historical faux pas. At other times, such as this, some liberties are allowed to be taken with a situation in order to make a better fiction story. Cruick knows his war stuff first hand. He has a long service record, lasting from his enlistment with the 63rd Canadian Battalion in 1915 until the Armistice was signed.

(Continued on page 182)

For THRILLS
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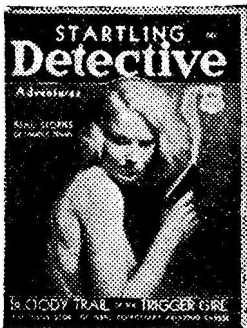
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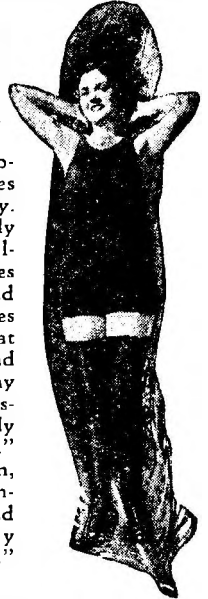
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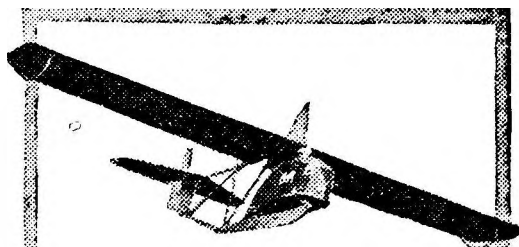
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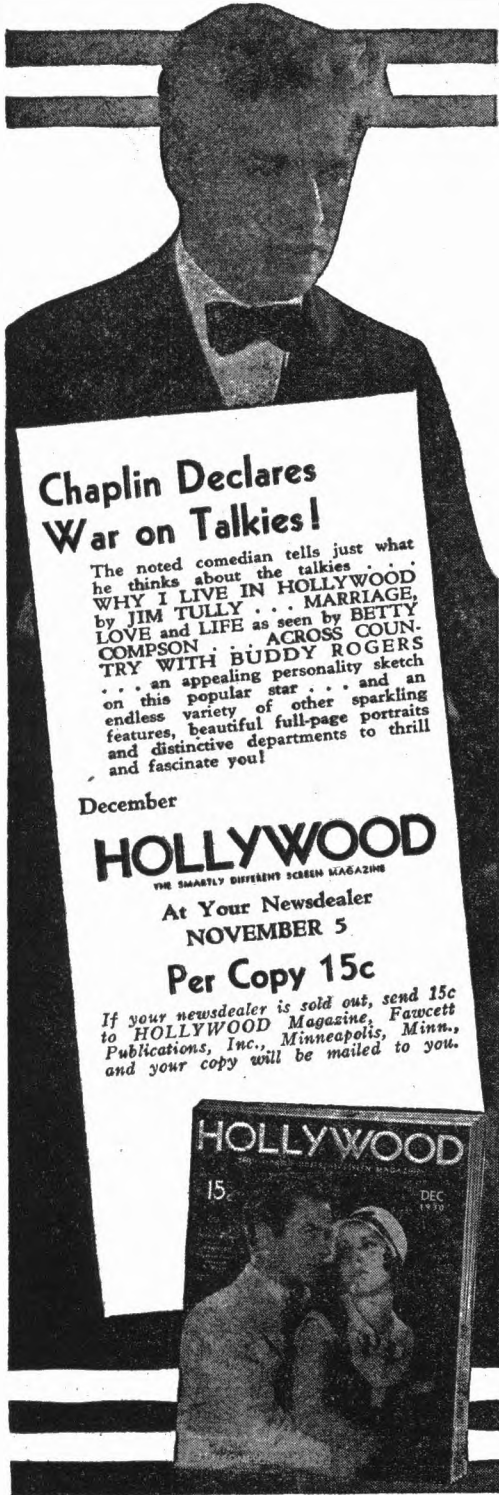
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December

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(Continued from page 178)
ANOTHER NEW AUTHOR
FRANK HUNT RENTFROW, whose leatherneck yarn, "The Suicide Squad," was a feature of the October BATTLE STORIES made his second bow to BATTLE STORIES readers last month with a poem, "The Doughboy's Steel" which has attracted considerable attention from readers. In his last letter he included a little information about himself which we are passing on to the Funk Hole gang.

Born in Chicago, 1900; tried to enlist for the Vera Cruz fiasco in 1914 and was thrown out of the Navy recruiting office by an outraged officer. Tried again in 1916 for Border service and was advised to wait until I grew up.

In 1917 I lied like a gentleman and landed in France as a member of the B. C. detail, Battery E, 122nd Field Artillery. Went into the lines in August and came out three days after the Armistice. After discharge re-enlisted in same unit as National Guard and served with them for eight years.

Thought the Nicaraguan fuss might prove interesting so signed up for a cruise with the Marines. Have now beaten my sword into a typewriter and at present I

(Continued on page 184)

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December

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Artificial Ear Drum

(Continued from page 182)

keep my feet on a desk marked "Associate Editor" of THE LEATHERNECK, the magazine of the Marine Corps. It's a good place to stand by until the next war.

Frank Hunt Rentfrow.

Rentfrow will be back in print shortly with another smashing account of the Marines' part in the big fracas, entitled, "Brothers Under the Tin".

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DECEMBER

Screen Play

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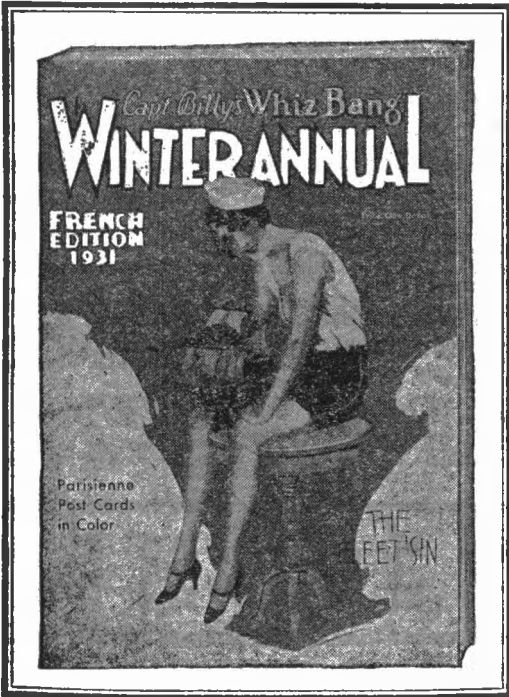
STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912.

OF FAWCETT'S BATTLE STORIES, published monthly at Minneapolis, Minn., for October 1, 1930. State of Minnesota, } 21.
County of Hennepin, }

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared R. M. Crutcher, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the FAWCETT'S BATTLE STORIES Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse side of this form, to-wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are:
Publisher, W. H. Fawcett, Minneapolis, Minn.
Editor, Roscoe Fawcett, Minneapolis, Minn.
Managing Editor, J. G. Smalley, Minneapolis, Minn.
Business Manager, R. M. Crutcher, Minneapolis, Minn.
2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock; if not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.)
Fawcett Publications, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn.
W. H. Fawcett, Minneapolis, Minn.; Roscoe Fawcett, Minneapolis, Minn.
3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.)
None.
4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.
R. M. CRUTCHER,
Business Manager.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of September, 1930.
FERN H. SEWALL,
Notary Public, Hennepin County, Minn.
(My commission expires Jan. 12, 1937.)

(SEAL)



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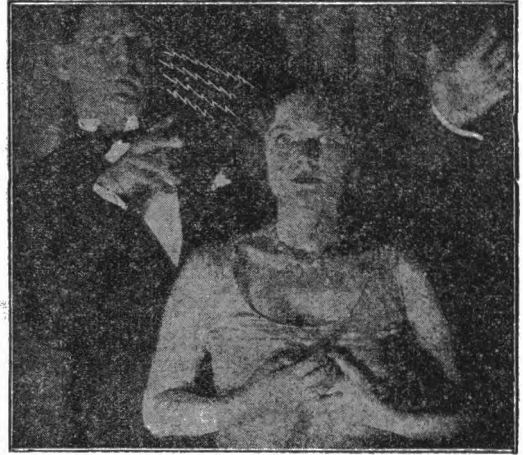
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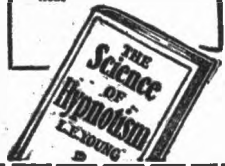
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This work will not be sold to minors. When ordering your book, state your age!

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Deaf-Dumb-Blind

Yet "He" STOPS Auto Thieves

What in the world IS this uncanny new discovery that so instantly terrifies auto thieves? Thieves fear it worse than poison. Its terrible power literally "petrifies" them. They cannot even remove a thing. Now your car can be absolutely safe, anywhere you leave it. Don't confuse this queer new invention with anything you ever saw. It is not a bell. Not a lock. Not an explosion. Not an electrical shocker. Not a poison gas. Yet the deadly fear it puts into thieves throws them into a panic. It works automatically the instant anyone even touches your car. Cannot injure innocent persons. Recommended by police and insurance companies. No bigger than your hand. Costs only one penny a year to operate. Almost never wears out. The cheapest, surest theft insurance you can buy. And that's not all. Excites and amuses everybody. Have lots of fun with your friends.

Mysterious New Invention Offers Agents Up To \$40 a Day

So startling, so absolutely new, so peculiar is this strange discovery that agents who have already taken it on are smashing daily profit records. The greatest crowd gatherer you ever saw. The minute you demonstrate this clever invention people are bewildered. They want to know how it "stiffens," "hypnotizes," "shell shocks" thieves. The need for this scientific protection is so great—the big profit possibilities are so almost unlimited and easy—that now we will actually pay you just to demonstrate this amazing thief chaser. You don't need to sell a single one to make this money. Just stand on the street by your car and make it perform its magic wonders that set your audience agog and bring quick profits. No use wasting your time any longer with "piker" propositions. \$40, \$50, \$75 a day is not too much to expect, is it? If we did not feel sure that you could make as much money as other men with this uncanny new discovery we certainly would not be willing to offer you pay just for demonstrating it. The protection it gives—its utter queerness—its strange power to put fear into thieves—and the fun it gives motorists make it the easiest, fastest selling, biggest money-making opportunity for you in many years.

We Pay You Just To Show It To Motorists

The market is so tremendous—orders are pouring in so fast—that we can afford to do almost unheard of things for our local distributors. Not only will we pay you just for testing it, but we will actually send you a Free Sample offer for your own car so that your car and accessories will be protected and to start you demonstrating it. Yet that's not all. We actually offer to pay you cash for merely testing it on your car. Now we have territories for 1,600 more county distributors and 100 district managers on this generous pay plan. With our nation-wide advertising plans ready to start at once, distributors should be literally flooded with orders. We have worked out a new plan so that you don't have to do any selling or demonstrating to car owners to make big money.



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To Test It

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Rush the coupon for your Free Sample offer—offer to pay for demonstrating and plan that gets you big money without doing any selling or demonstrating to car owners. Send no money. Just coupon. This is not an order. Nothing will be sent C. O. D. This Sample Offer is yours free of all cost. Just mail coupon now.

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New!



PATENTED

Just A Twist Of The Wrist Banishes Old-Style Can Openers to the Scrap Heap and **BRINGS AGENTS UP TO \$6 AND \$8 IN AN HOUR!**

WOMEN universally detest the old style can opener. Yet in every home in the land cans are being opened with it often several times a day. Imagine how thankfully they welcome this new method—this automatic way of doing their most distasteful job. With the Speedo can opening machine you can just put the can in the machine, turn the handle, and almost instantly the job is done.

where are finding this invention a truly revolutionary money maker.

A "Million Dollar" Can Opening Machine

The Speedo holds the can—opens it—flips up the lid so you can grab it—and gives you back the can without a drop spilled, without any rough edges to snag your fingers—all in a couple of seconds! It's so easy even a 10-year-old child can do it in perfect safety! No wonder women—and men, too—simply go wild over it! No wonder Speedo salesmen have sold to every house in the block and have made up to \$8 in an hour.

Generous Free Test Offer

Frankly, men, I realize that the profit possibilities of this proposition as outlined briefly here may seem almost incredible to you. So I've worked out a plan by which you can examine the invention and test its profits without risking one penny.

Get my free test offer while the territory you want is still open—I'll hold it for you while you make the test. I'll send you all the facts about salesmen making up to \$100 and even more in a week. I'll also tell you about another fast selling item that brings you two profits. All you risk is a 2c stamp—so grab your pencil and shoot me the coupon right now.

CENTRAL STATES MFG. CO.,

(Est. over 20 years)

Dept. W-1424, 4500 Mary Ave., St. Louis, Mo.



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4500 Mary Ave., Dept. W-1424, St. Louis, Mo.

Rush me your FREE TEST OFFER.

Name

Address

City State.....

[] Check here if interested only in one for your home.

AGENTS!



Full Time
\$265
in a
Week

"Here is my record for first 30 days with Speedo:
June 13, 60 Speedos;
June 20, 84 Speedos;
June 30, 192 Speedos;
July 6, 288 Speedos.
I made \$265 in a week."

M. ORNOFF, Va.

SPARE TIME

\$9 First Half Day

"The first afternoon I received my Speedo outfit I made \$9."

MRS. R. SPAIN, Kas.

PART TIME

\$20 in 3 Hours

"I worked about three hours and took 25 orders. This brought me \$20 profit."

O. C. GREGG, Wyo.

End This Waste and Danger

You undoubtedly know what a nasty, dangerous job it is to open cans with the old-fashioned can opener. You have to hack your way along slowly—ripping a jagged furrow around the edge. Next thing you know, the can opener slips. Good night! You've torn a hole in your finger. As liable as not it will get infected and stay sore a long time. Perhaps even your life will be endangered from blood poisoning!

You may be lucky enough to get the can open without cutting yourself. But there's still the fact to consider that the ragged edge of tin left around the top makes it almost impossible to pour out all of the food. Yet now, all this trouble, waste and danger is ended. No wonder salesmen every-