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THE KNIFE

by ROBERT CARSE

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

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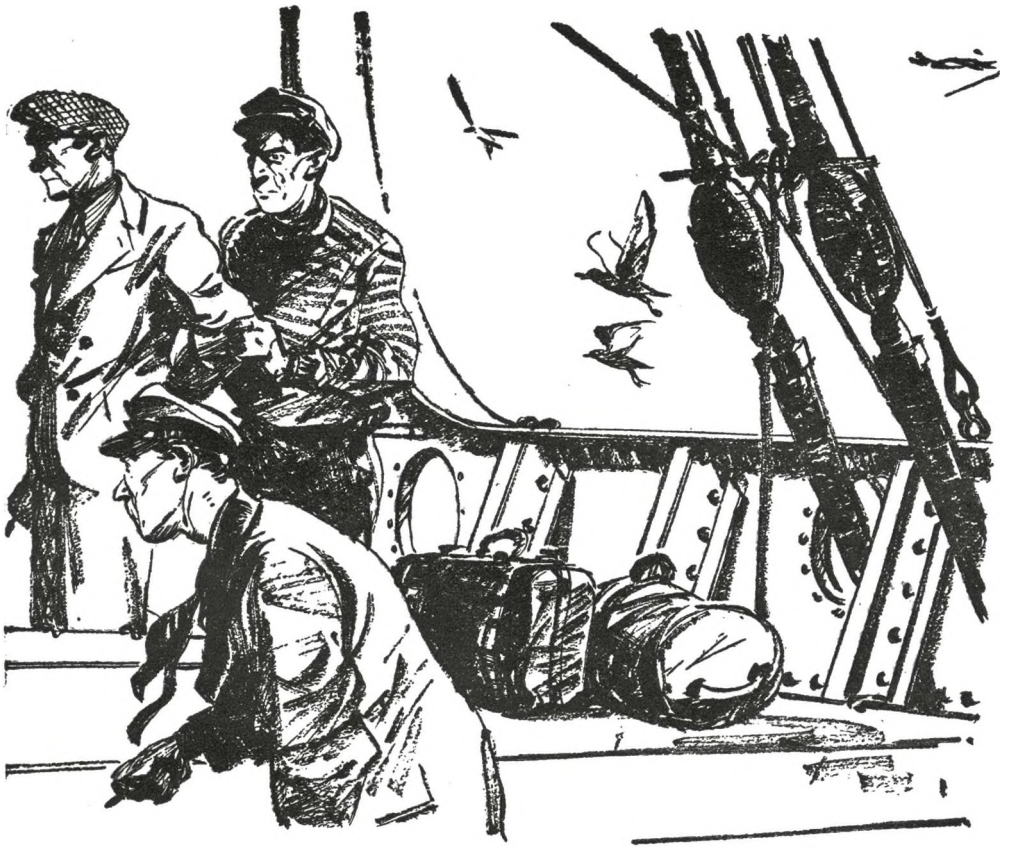
THE KNIFE

CHAPTER I

"WORSE THAN A BUM BULL!"

THERE had just been the creaking slap of the screen door above, and then his quick, hard steps across the lower bridge deck to warn them. But where they slouched or sat about the 'midships hatch, some of them still cursing, some sick yet, or drunk and singing, they looked up at him and slowly gathered, standing in a tight group. And at the ladder-head, his sun-faded khaki go-ashore suit flapping against the tremendous barrel of his chest in the breath of the afternoon breeze off the land, Donalds smiled at them, one thumb lifting to push back a bit from his brown face the wide brim of his old *jipijapa* hat.

"You know me, eh?" he asked of them in his mild, slow voice. "You've heard of me, of Johnny Donalds, and this ship." Beneath the wide hat brim, they clearly could see the eyes, the dark blue of tempered steel, and as cold as steel. Those eyes mocked them, galled them more than any words he could have said, and one or two of them cursed at him in muttering voices. For another moment he stood silent and motionless, the vast span of his shoulders all but filling the width of the ladder, his block-like hands, as seamed as old wood and heavily tufted with black hair along the backs and wrists, out upon the hand-rails. "All



A novelette by **Robert Carse**

right," he said then. "Turn to. Bring that ladder inboard."

Their heads turned and they stared back at Manila, now luminously blurred by the heat haze of late afternoon, a fantastically beautiful city. Bare feet and worn shoes scuffed nervously over the deck-plates; they thought of the warm, soft moonlight nights and the easy, laughing girls of the Escolta.

"Aye," Donalds said down to them. "You'll have no more of that for a long time. Go down that ladder, and the cops who brought you here will take ye to the rock pile at Bilibid. You heard me. Get that ladder inboard! And I want a man up here for the wheel. Get them going, bosun!"

The man he called boatswain stood a little apart from the rest. He wore what at one time had been, in his days as a chief officer, a quite presentable derby hat and a blue serge suit. Unconsciously, he lifted the fingers of his right hand to the grease-grimed brim of the hat in a gesture he meant to be a salute, and tried to check the twitching of his body and the blinking of his eyes in their puffed sockets.

"You heard the skipper, lads," he said; "turn to."

Even to Donalds that morning in his office, the harbor master had named them as beachcombers and raffish petty thieves, adding that the police and the city would be at least equally as glad to get rid of them as Donalds would to sign them as his crew.

"You own your own ship, Captain," the harbor master said. "You take your own responsibility in signing these swabs on for any sort of a voyage. Most of them have got seamen's papers, but almost all of them have got more convincing jail records. Out to sea, I think you're going to have a job on your hands."

Donalds had smiled before he answered. "A man always has a job on his hands out to sea. They'll be sailors before I'm through with them. It's steam and steel now, instead of sail and wood, but the way you take a drunken shore-bound bum and make a sailor out of him is just the same. Now, I'm thinkin' you. . . ."

But on his 'midships deck, Donalds saw, the group was laughing at the man in the derby hat, cursing him in half a dozen languages. Unseen, some one of them adroitly advanced a foot and arm from the press of bodies, tripped and flung the boatswain headlong, sent the sorry derby hat rolling in the scupper waterway. Then, shoulder to shoulder, they stood laughing, their eyes not on Donalds, but on the man he had chosen to convey and carry forth his commands.

Slowly, Donalds took one step down the ladder, his hands lifted off the rails. A man had broken from the group, gone to the prostrate boatswain, knelt beside him. He was tall, that one, and slope-shouldered, the muscles flat against the long reach of his bare arms in the thin cotton singlet, the bone-hafted knife in its canvas sheath jutting up from his belt at the hip of his worn dungaree trousers.

"Hey, you!" Donalds called. "Hey, Red!"

The tall man turned, the boatswain's head against his bony knee, and the sun was full upon the fair, light blue of his eyes, the long-jawed face, a sort of ruddy sheen upon the close golden red hair underneath the white watch cap.

"Yeah," he said, immobile, one hand, faintly tattooed in a blue anchor design, out upon the deck, the fingers straight.

"Let go that man and stand up; he's all right. Stand up! What's your name?"

The red-headed man still knelt, and did not smile as he spoke. "This fellow's not all right; he got a lump on the back of his head like a lemon. Me, my name is Yodin Gunnar."

DONALDS stood with his feet spread upon the ladder step, studying the long jaw and the long, squarely formed head, the faded tattoo design and the stitching of the canvas sheath holding the bone-hafted knife. He had not, he thought slowly, seen more than half a dozen men in steamships who carried such a knife, nor half a dozen men like this one.

"What," he asked, "are you doing, carrying a knife like that, sailor?"

The man who had named himself Yodin Gunnar was getting to his feet; he was lifting the mumbling boatswain as he would haul a half-filled sack. But his eyes swung, and met with the eyes of Donalds and, gravely, he said, "I just carry it handy."

Donalds laughed at him.

" 'A sailor without a knife,' " he said, quoting the old sea axiom, " 'is worse than a bum bull,' hey? Here!" He had retreated a step, back up to the lower bridge and the after side of the deck-house and the brightly painted hose connection there, to reach down and snap short from its chain lanyard a clean-shafted steel spanner. He flung the thing in front of Gunnar. "Put that guy on the hatch. Then take that spanner and beat the ears off any of those swabs who don't hop to it when you speak; you're bosun in this ship now. No man but a real sailor carries a knife like that. Bring the ladder aboard, then pick your gang and get along up on the focsle-head with the mate. Lay along, man!"

Quickly, Yodin Gunnar reached out

with his bare foot and kicked the red-painted spanner into the scupperway. He released the man Donalds had signed that morning as his bosun and stood back from him. He laughed, more easily and softly than Donalds.

"I'm not signed as bosun on this ship," he said. "I'm signed as an A. B. sailor."

One of the men behind him laughed then, and made a thick derisory sound with his lips; with a speed that was feral and immediate, Gunnar turned, his hand going forward in a jab that caught the point of the chin with the heel of the palm, lifted the other off his feet and onto the back of his head and shoulders on the deck.

"Pipe down, land-locked!" Gunnar said, almost whispering. "Only sailors laugh here. . . ." Then he turned.

Donalds had come skidding down the ladder, riding on his hands along the rails, his feet free from the treads. He walked past Gunnar and past the others. When he came back, he carried the spanner in his right hand, the former chief officer's hat in his left.

"You, sailor," he said in a low, quiet tone to Gunnar, "go up and take the wheel; the pilot's been waiting for fifteen minutes now. . . . And when we're down the river, we'll see who says he's bosun in the ship. Lay topside!"

Gunnar smiled at him with his eyes. He touched the brim of his cap and then, wholly expressionless, said, "Aye, sir!" From the lower bridge deck, as he started towards the second ladder and the navigation bridge, he looked back and down. Donalds had put the spanner in a side pocket of his khaki jacket. With an emphasis that Gunnar knew sprung only from contempt, he was ordering the men there to the accommodation-ladder tackle, and they were obeying him, the bloody-headed official boatswain staggering among the last of them.

"More than just an old-fashioned bully boy," said Gunnar, to himself, then turned along the bridge and past the staring pilot to the wheel-house and the wheel.

CHAPTER II

HARD JOHNNY DONALDS

THE fan-shaped muddy spread of the waters of the Rio Pasig washed thinly out now in the darkening cobalt of Manila Bay. The pilot had gone and the land was dark astern. The ship tracked with slow, heavy pounding towards the straits. Gunnar stood with one knee and one elbow against the wheel, listening to the inner sounds of the ship, sensing the ship, feeling her through all his habituated senses.

There was no breeze. The sea was an utterly flat and almost unmoving plain, through which the ship bluntly troughed a faint silver spume. But the motion of the ship herself brought a dim passage of air. Gunnar could hear the tread of the lookout up and back across the focsle-head, could tell when the man stopped to lean against the barrel of the capstan winch or stand quiet at the stem. On the bridge outside the wheel-room the canvas on the awning spars lifted slowly and filled, dropped with a little fluttering, soughing sound, filled and emptied again, the rope stoppers whispering against the steel.

Donalds' steps were regular, never changing. He took twenty-four paces down the bridge, turned smartly in the bridge-wings, and took twenty-four paces back. There was a faded canvas deck-chair in the starboard wing, but in the hours that Gunnar had been here Donalds had not sat in it; he had walked sharply around it. The man seemed to be constantly in motion. Perhaps, in this ship, Gunnar thought, he could do nothing else.

The clock struck four bells, ten o'clock. With the fingers of his left hand Gunnar balanced the 'midships spoke; with his

right, he reached overhead and grasped the bell lanyard, beat forth coupleted the four strokes. In a low, clear voice, he said:

"As she goes."

Donalds had stopped right outside the middle wheel-house window. He was facing forward, towards the focsle-head.

"As she goes," he repeated. Then the hail of the lookout reporting the riding lights came floating back from the jar of notes of the big focsle-head bell, and strongly he answered the man's shout:

"Lights are burning bright!"

But after he had spoken Donalds did not move; he leaned in silence against the foreside of the wheel-house, the outspread, shallow light of the binnacle upon his back. Against the mat over the grating behind the wheel Gunnar shifted his feet and weight.

"Mister," he asked calmly, "what the hell is this—a one-watch ship?"

Gradually, Donalds turned then and looked in at him across the barrier of the binnacle light.

"I thought you were a sailor," he said. In the yellow light his dull, strong teeth showed in a smile.

Gunnar swore slowly.

"A lot of guys have said that," he said. "You're not the first. But I've been on this wheel since a little before five o'clock. I heard about you, and this one, back in that port, but I didn't sign for any quartermaster's or bosun's pay."

Donalds slightly lifted and dropped one shoulder.

"What did they say," he asked, "about this one, and about me, back in that port?"

"They said," Gunnar let the wheel go down a spoke, brought it back, "that you were a skin-flint son and a belly-robbin' bully boy. And all you thought about was loading this ship of yours for all she would take, and paying your crews as little as they'd take. That you thought of nothing but your ship, and, even in these times, you could only get a crew to ride with you once."

"But you joined her," Donalds said. "You were glad to sign on with that pack of beach rats. You say you knew about her—that she was a big ship, and that there would be a lot of work for a good sailor in her. Why did you grab her, sailor?"

Gunnar set back his head and laughed at the shadowy wheel-room and the ship.

"Because any ship's better than the beach," he said. "And I got drunk with my gal and missed the one I had before. That was a good ship, though."

"THIS is a good one," Donalds said softly. "It's the men who shipped in her who've given her the bad name."

Gunnar stared down and forward, at the reach and strength of the fore-deck, the foremast and deck booms, the clean sweep of the loof and lines of the bow.

"Yeah," he muttered, strangely forced to honesty although he knew he already all but hated this man, "she's a good ship, and a strong one. But how about the guys you brought west in her, to the Islands? What happened to them?"

"Some of 'em died," said Donalds simply. "They weren't strong men. They weren't sailors. They couldn't take it."

"'Take it,' hell!" Gunnar told him. "You ran this packet way up the back river from Georgetown in British Guiana, on the lousiest fever coast in the world. You picked up a consignment of case kerosene that no other skipper or company would handle, and took it up a hundred miles along the river and discharged it by hand. I know that country. I come from there."

"You know," said Donalds after him. "You're a sailor—you wear dungarees and a sheath knife, and you can steer a ship—and you say you know. Well, know this then, square-head: I own this one; she's mine, and just about all I want. And I didn't shanghai those hands

aboard, any more than I shanghaied you and these other swabs. And when I took them up the river, I warned them first; I gave them mosquito nets for their bunks, and all the quinine they wanted to draw from the chest. But they got drunk up the river, and they went ashore and danced with the niggers and got chock-a-block with the fever. They laughed at me and the fever."

"And when you came out of there eighteen of them died of it, between Panama and the Islands," Gunnar said. "Then the rest of them who could still stand up in Manila took what pay they could get and beat it. . . . Sure, you own this ship. And you keep up the way you're going now, you'll own a nice, square chunk of hell. Mister, you called me for a sailor, and you got me on your articles, but no articles I signed can keep me on a watch more than six hours straight. Get another guy on this wheel; get one of your bob-tail, black ticket mates up here. I'm going below, and I'm going to eat, and get some shut-eye. Caulk that down, and prize it tight!"

Donalds turned fully around. Lightly, he vaulted through the low and broad window.

"You pack a knife," he said. "I pack these. . . ." He spread the thick and hairy hands tautly out. "You stay on that wheel until I tell you to come off it. I'm skipper here, and those mates I signed on aren't worth the ink their tickets are written with. I worked them loop-legged in port, loading and checking cargo, because I wouldn't trust one of them to stand a bridge watch until we're through the straits and in the open sea. You and I are going to stand watch-and-watch on the wheel until we're through the straits and squarely on the line for Panama. Get that, sailor?"

Gunnar cursed him, carefully, and with admirable diction. But then he laughed, and stood back, letting the wheel spokes glint spinning down.

"Take it, then!" he said. "You cheap bilge-diver! Shove it down your throat! When you want me, come down to the focsle and get me. . . . Try it! If these guys you got aren't officers and sailors, make 'em that way! I stand my own watches, and that's all."

Donalds had caught the wheel grips, brought the helm back onto the course. His head swung and he stared quite briefly at Gunnar.

"Some time soon," he said, "you're going to have real need for that knife, sailor."

GUNNAR could hear them in the focsle when he was amidships at the galley, filling a mess-kit with a coagulated pile of stew, bread and lukewarm soup from the back of the stove. Their shouts and songs rang all across the after part of the ship as he came down the ladder onto the after well-deck and to the focsle door. They were about the long, oilclothed table in the one big room of the focsle. Looking up, they jeered and laughed at him, two or three jerking bottles high.

One fore-and-aft bunk beneath a porthole was empty and he went silently towards it, sat there, the mess-kit balanced on his knees, and began to eat. But one of them, a skinny and sag-shouldered youth, who wore a white duck uniform and a cap carrying the stained badge of a famous passenger line, lifted from the bench and came shambling to him.

"H'are yuh?" he asked, hanging to the bunk stanchion with one hand, his small, nearly colorless eyes fixedly unblinking in his flat-planed face. "H' are yuh, fella? Have a drink. That's most o' mine they're drinking. . . . Loweck's my name; third mate. Gunnar, that's your name, hey?"

"Yeah, that's right," Gunnar said. "That's my name." He nodded, not looking up, and went on eating.

"Fine. . . . That's fine." Loweck said. He was fishing cigarettes and matches out of his jacket pocket. "How's it going on

the bridge? How's old tuppence-ha-p-ny making out with his lousy ship?"

"You ask him," Gunnar said, softly. "And, don't sit in this bunk; this here is mine. . . ."

The youth who had announced himself as Loweck, third officer of the ship, stepped back a pace and made the motion of drawing his shoulders up.

"Listen," he said. "Get wise. . . . Haven't you heard about that rotten dog, and how he treats his crews? How he treated that last outfit he carried here? He's a murdering, no-good dog; *savvy?*"

"You tell him that?" Gunnar asked.

Loweck laughed, his loose lips working. "Tell him nothin'; I know. . . . Me and the other two mates came aboard ten days before he could scrape you fellows out o' the gutter. And what's he do with us the first day? He sends us down in the lower holds, chipping rust. Then, when he starts loading, he puts us checking and slinging cargo, and over the side on stages at night, painting boot-topping."

Gunnar cleaned the mess-kit, started back towards his bunk.

Loweck had a bottle now. "Have a drink, Red," he said. "Take a snort before that son comes aft and turns us all to. That lookout up there and you were the only two men he could catch to work. This is just a hard-case packet; get wise to it right now. The other two mates who signed with me are a couple of real black-ticket lads. Old guys who've held commands an' lost 'em; you know. . . . And have been on the booze and the beach for years, and couldn't even get a job out here until this Hard Johnny Donalds put into port. He's only got one decent man, and that's his Chief—old MacDowie; Mac runs it all below. I've seen him. He takes them by the seat of the skivvies and the neck, as soon as they hit the fire-room floor off the ladders, and he heaves them right at the fire-doors if they don't start heaving coal *pronto*. I—"

"—You buy that cap along with your ticket?" Gunnar said, and went on past him, to his bunk.

BUT Loweck followed him, caught him loosely by the shoulder, as though to spin him around. Gunnar turned easily, his hands in front of him. Loweck's eyes and face had flushed a vague red. Behind him, advanced from the table, were the officially accredited bosun, blear-eyed and stupid with the liquor now, and the man who that afternoon had tripped the bosun to the deck but who, in present great companionship, guided him by the arm.

"A wise guy," Loweck said, indicating for them and all the others in the room the tall and motionless man crouched quietly before him on the bunk rim. "A soogey-moogey, forty bucks a month deckhand who's a wise guy. . . . Listen, you; I'm riding third mate here. Maybe I do come aft to have a drink with the boys once in a while, but one more crack out of you like that—"

"Leave me talk to him. Leave me rig his brooms!" It was the man who supported the overladen boatswain. He stepped clear now, walked right up where Gunnar sat, and stood spraddle-legged and bending before him. "I seen guys like you in th' Navy," he said; "a lot o' them. Smart babies who had the idea that maybe if they stood nine guys' watches all t'once the exec' or th' old man would take notice of 'em and make admirals out o' them. Yeah. But not here, red-top. You turn to, and stand a six hour watch, he can make us all do it, an' log our pay away or sling us in th' brig on punk an' water if we don't. But, if we all stand t'gether, we got him, we outsmart him, an' he got to let us work when we like, an' eat what we like—or else put back inta port and wait fer a better crew. And that's something he ain't going to get in Manila. Yuh better tumble t' yerself right now, er one o' these nights soon yer head 'll go over

th' rail and yer feet after it. So take what I say and stow it good, bozo."

The man who spoke had a long and thick nose. Reaching up in a focsle gesture he had learned in his first ship years ago, Gunnar caught the wide nostrils between his thumb and forefinger tightly, then slapped sharply down upon his wrist with the other hand. The ex-Navy man uttered a sound like a horse in the throes of death agony. He swung with both hands at Gunnar's head, and one of Gunnar's bare, hard heels, rising from the deck, caught him in the pit of the stomach and sent him in a hurtling dive that was stopped by the mess-bench.

Loweck was already backing from him, muttering, his hands and elbows up around his face. Gunnar only laughed at him, then the others.

"You've drunk all his booze," he told the rest. "Now heave him out of here!" He did not wait to watch them, he did look at them again. From his bunk he picked up the cotton-covered mattress and pillow and two blue cotton sheets, went straight towards the door and the ladder to the poop.

The air was clean, cool and soft on the poop. Right at the taffrail, in the lee of the small poop-house, he spread the straw mattress and the sheets and pillow. In the poop-house the steering engine slid occasionally, pounding, the relieving tackles clattering in their sheaves; underneath him the screw turned with an even majestic thudding that was to him old but always lovely music.

Just before he pulled the sheet up and let his head go to the stiff pillow, he looked aft at the wake, a luminous, absolutely direct line arrowing back into the night, and then stared forward, at the wings of the bridge. No one walked the wings or stood bridge watch there. The man they called Hard Johnny Donalds stood his own wheel-watch, put his own ship true down the course of her Easting.

"To hell with him!" Gunnar muttered, turning his head against the pillow. Then, from the focsle door, he heard a dull, jarring thump, a high yell, curses and laughter; the more comic-minded of the focsle denizens had just heaved Mister Loweck out onto the unreceptive steel of the well-deck. "And to hell with them, too," he whispered, as sleep rose in over him.

CHAPTER III

TYPHOON

THE man who flicked the flashlight beam into his face and shook him by the shoulder was broad and big-stomached, had a breath that smelled foully of well-chewed Copenhagen snuff. Gunnar sat up and back, swung once and was on his feet.

"T'is MacDowie, man," the other said in a slow, unhurried voice. "T'is MacDowie, th' chief engineer. I thought ye was one o' my lads, come here t' sneak his watch. But ye're the red-headed lad, th' one Donalds is about tellin' me."

MacDowie swung his head and spat, missing the taffrail jackstaff by an inch. "I should ha' known, ye wouldn't ha' been caulkin' off here, and not with them in th' zoo below. But if ye want sleep, man, take it; I was after a look at me steerin' engine, in the door here." One hand, immense even in the grayish darkness, lifted and scratched shortly at the bush of hair upon the chest which bulged tight the stained boiler suit he wore.

Then beneath the brows which reared like mustaches between the utterly bald skull and the deep-socketed eyes, he smiled. "But ye'll not be sleepin' long."

From underneath his pillow, Gunnar was lifting up his folded white cap and the sheathed knife. He shook the cap out, stretched it slowly over the base of his skull, slid the knife back on his hand-made plaited belt.

"You're telling me," he said, "or Hard Johnny?"

MacDowie had gone to the poop-house, opened the door to the steering engine, stood halfway within, the flashlight shifting in his hand.

"Our man Johnny," he said, "says ye're the one sailor in th' new batch. Take a look aloft, lad."

The sea and the sky were the same color. Only in the eastern board, where the new sun was a smirched brown, could he find the horizon. Right over the side, the sea was like slate, undulated only by the motion of the ship's passing; the air against his body pressed with a weight that seemed to drag all his limbs, vise a choking grip upon his breathing.

"When do we hit the straits?" Gunnar said in a low, quiet voice.

"We're in 'em," MacDowie said, his back bent to the relieving tackle gear.

"Who's on the wheel?"

"Our bonnie Johnny." MacDowie stepped back out of the poop-house, shut the door and jammed into place across it one by one the big steel storm dogs. "That's typhoon up ahead; I woke ye, so I'll tell ye. Just th' tail o' one, come up from Guam in a hell of a hurry durin' the night."

"So Donalds sent you aft for me." Gunnar laughed with a low sound.

"Donalds," said MacDowie, "sent me nowheres. What's down below, I run; that's MacDowie's all th' way. I come aft fer a look at the gear meself; what they give me as a deck engineer yesterday ain't fit to thread a joint. But Donald's alone on that wheel, and if any o' them mates blew his nose, they wouldn't know their names. I can only tell ye, sailor; ye shipped in this one, just like me. She's a good ship, too, strong an' well-found."

MacDowie was walking forward along the strip of deck, soundless in his grease-soaked congress gaiters. But by the ladder-head he stopped and looked back and nodded.

"When ye get her through it," he said, "stop by th' room amidships, an' maybe I can find a drink."

Gunnar could not laugh; he cursed. "You partners with the belly-robber in owning this one?"

MacDowie was on the ladder, and Gunnar could only see the upper half of his face, the eyes, the tremendous, weird eyebrows and the gleamingly naked skull.

"Laddie," he said dimly, "I would no' be here if I did. This is th' sole pride an' property o' Hard Johnny. But th' man is no' so bad as he would make ye think. There's good in th' bucko, but t'is all inside, way down."

"So damn' far it chokes in him!" Gunnar said, but he was starting forward as he spoke, and his eyes were already on the bridge.

AS it had come, it passed, in savage swiftness. The sea rose and fell in great swells that caromed in mid-air, frothed and turned sliding on the ship. Far to the west and north, the typhoon still tore, black and ragged along the sea, blanking the sky. But to the east, on the course Gunnar again held the beaten ship, darkness was rent like an immense tapestry to show an irradiance of sunlight which funneled down upon blue and calm sea.

Gunnar stood bowed at the wheel, almost all his weight against it. An incessant, throbbing ache, like the second stage of fever, was through his body. His eyes, puffed by sleeplessness, reddened by the raw slap of the wind, blinked at the compass card unseeing; he steered by the sway of the bow against that downpouring gold splashing of the sun, and the feel of the ship under him.

When Donalds and the two other men came up the ladder, he did not lift his head. He waited only for one of them, a faded and vague man in a khaki officer's watch jacket, to come forward to the

wheel. Then, though, he heard Donald's voice, and pulled his glance around and smiled.

During the hours of the wrack of the typhoon upon the ship, Donalds had been off the bridge. He had been everywhere else in the ship, and he had driven before him the men who, laughing, had late yesterday signed his articles as a deck force. He had cursed, driven and struck those men, then led them after him and saved his ship if not also all their lives. Now he talked in a croak which sounded like a tired parrakeet; he cursed his chief mate:

"Get to hell away from that wheel, you! You're in this ship as chief mate, lunk-head, and you'll draw pay for that. . . . You, Tuliano!"

Tuliano, the sailor, who stood dully gaping behind the mate, was a man of mixed Chinese, Filipino and Malayan blood, and what he had seen and experienced in the last four hours had left his face a dirty tallow color, his body a spent mass of soreness. But he jumped now, as though lashed by a whip, and his hands pulled up and out from his sides, so that the nails of the fingers, pulped and smashed back from the quicks when Donalds had driven them to putting a new storm tarpaulin on number two hatch, showed plainly in the sunlight. "No can steer, *Capitan*. No can stand watch like thees—"

There was a raw gash all along one side of Donalds's cheek where he had been flung against a winch-head in a sea which had almost swept the number two hatch storm tarpaulin overside; his own hands were bloodied, blue with bruises and his knees knocked together in absolute fatigue as he moved. He had to take three paces before he could be sure of his aim, then he hit Tuliano between the ear and the point of the jaw, kicked him until the man stood again.

"Relieve the wheel," Donalds said. "And you, Mister;" Donalds let his glance fall upon the white-faced mate,

"see that he stays on it. Take a sight as soon as you can get the sun, then a check on that. Bring it down to me in my room. If you haven't got it right, I'll give you more than I just gave that Gook. Understand all that? All right, Red; get off the wheel!"

Silently and slowly, Gunnar stood back, trying to ease his stiffened and salt-blistered hands.

"As she goes," he told the mate and Tuliano, watching the mixed-blood as he sagged onto the grating and clumsily took up the spokes. Then, his elbows out for support against the bulkhead,

he started for the door and the ladder. He was down the first ladder flight and stumbling across the lower bridge deck when he heard Donalds's barked words from behind him.

Donalds had followed him down the ladder, stood now at the shattered screen door leading to his quarters.

"That was a good job, Red," he said slowly, croaking the words. "Only two men in the ship could ha' done it—you, or me. But wait a minute."

"Wait a minute, hell!" Gunnar told him. "For what—more work?"

Donalds stood a little straighter, and he smiled.

"No," he said. "I was going to broach the medicine chest, for the two guys who rate it. Will you scoff a little Bourbon likker with me before you go below, Red?"

"Get it!" Gunnar told him savagely. "And bring the bloody bottle!"

THEY drank it neat, from the bottle and in turn. The liquor flamed in the cuts on their bruised lips and seared through their brains and bodies. They laughed in unison as Donalds spanked the crest of an oncoming swell with the empty bottle.

"It's a good life, Red," said Donalds. "Look for'ard, there, then take a slant aft. . . ."

Forward, moving sprightly under the orders of the vague-voiced boatswain, six men of the deck gang were clearing the typhoon-smashed clutter of small gear off the decks, tightening side-stays and reeving new halyards. On the boat-deck midships, one of his eyes empurpled and closed shut by what must have been a terrific fist blow, Mister Loweck, the third officer, aided by a gangling, gray-headed man whom Gunnar knew to be the second officer, was stitching and reinforcing the torn cover from number one boat. Aft of that pair, the two remaining members of the deck force toiled rapidly at hauling coal sacks from the booby-hatch to the galley bunker.

"It's a good life," said Donalds. "But it takes a man to bring a ship through a storm, and make swabs like them turn to and work. . . ."

He paused, leaning back as did Gunnar, against the side of the emergency boat in her gallows along the break of the short deck where they stood.

"Those jaspers," he said, "know who owns this ship, and who runs her now. They'll work, and they'll work like hell, right from here to Panama, and beyond that. When we come up the bay, they'll have this one looking yacht-style. . . ." He set back his battered head into the full and warm sunlight and barked with laughter:

"You were the only sailor among 'em when they come over the side yesterday. But they'll all be sailors by the time we hit Panama. And they'll go ashore with the money I'll pay 'em and they'll call me for a hard-case louse in every gin-mill they roll into. But, that ain't any news in Panama, or anywheres. They've always called me 'Hard Johnny' in the ships, and my old man and his old man before him. . . .

"The first Hard Johnny was a clipper-ship man, and he had to be hard, whether he liked it or not. The outfit he worked for drove him, and he drove the ship and the men who worked for him. He was a house-flag sailor, a company man, and he owned a place ashore and had a wife and kids. And all he thought of was his ship, and the company. The company kept him driving in the wind-ships long after they were through; kept pushing him with small cargoes and small crews, against the steamer time and the steamer trade.

"It took a tough man, but he admitted to that, and cursed the damned steamers. He got caught one night, off the Argentine; a *pampero* ripped every stick out of the old wind-bag he had; he and every hand went down with her."

Donalds stopped and swung squarely against the breeze and spat. When he turned back, he stared with narrowed eyes at his own ship. Then, his voice harsh, he said abruptly:

"That should ha' been a lesson to my old man. Because the company his old man worked for didn't give the widow a lousy nickel; they said, instead, that th' guy it'd always pleased 'em to call Hard Johnny Donalds had been driving his ship under too much cloth, and that was why he lost her. . . .

"But my old man went to sea anyhow. In the steamers, and for a big company, too. And he was an aces-up sailor and a driver. In eight years, he had the crack ship of the company. Then in a pea-soup fog one night, coming out of the St. Georges' from Liverpool, running wide-open with orders from New York to beat a big new flash Limey packet home, he chopped down a trawler—sliced her right in half.

"The newspaper boys and the inspectors were waiting for him when he came up the Bay in New York. And he could prove that he'd done all he could to save the trawler's crew, that he'd been running full-open on company orders. They didn't take his ticket away, but the company fired him, and he never got another ship; no other company would hire him, and the underwriters saw he kept out of the other ships. When I was a kid, the last job he had was splicin' wire for the phone company. . . ."

GUNNAR lifted one bare, scarred foot and then the other, feeling the weariness inside him too great yet to be encompassed and assuaged by sleep.

"That's the sea," he said. "What th' hell!"

"No, by God, it ain't the sea!" At his side, Donalds pushed around to stare at him. "That ain't but part of it. I know; I've proved it!" Donalds held a hand out, jabbing it towards the other man, smiling sourly:

"And I know all about you; you ain't kidding me one bit, Red. I figured it out last night, after you went off the wheel. You're a West Indian man; out of the Virgin Islands. Your folks, the Gunnars, were a big family there for a long time. They used to run the biggest shipping house in Christiansted, when the islands were the old Danish West Indies and that was the one real free port outside o' Hamburg. Your folks owned wind ships, and sailed 'em, under your own house-flag, right up until before the war. That right, or you want to call me for a liar?"

Yodin Gunnar made a sound which remotely resembled laughter.

"Callin' you a liar," he said, "won't bring those ships back; no. . . . But what d' you mean, about those ships, and my folks, and me? Those ships are gone; the family's gone. I'm the last man by the name of Yodin Gunnar, and I sign as focsle sailor. That's all, and that's enough!"

"Sure." Donalds had leaned out, so that he might stare aft and gauge the path of the wake and thereby the quality of the helmsmanship topside. "That's enough, for you. But you're like me; you're a sailor, and nothin' else. Even when your family went bust and lost a lot more than it had ever made out of the sea, you had to go in the ships.

"But ye told yourself you wanted no command, no responsibility, nothing to tie you to a ship and the sea; you wanted to be ready to leave the ships whenever you felt like it, to stand your watch, and no more. . . .

"Ye can't keep out of the ships, though, and down inside you're proud that you're a real sailorman. That's why you pack that sheath knife. That's the sign of your trade, o' your own real clip and speed to any mate or skipper who'd take you for just a dumb, steamship focsle

lug. Yeah, you're pretty damn' proud of that knife."

"You want it?" Gunnar asked, and, rapidly, it was out and flat against his palm, the carved bone haft right below Donalds's chin.

Donalds cursed him mildly.

"No," he said. "That's your fun, *hombre*. This here is mine—all o' this one. Because in her I'm free, and a damn' lot more than you with that flamin' knife. I run the world in this one; I take her where I want. No guy tells me what port I put into or what course I lay on; no guy gives Hard Johnny Donalds orders. Sure, I worked for her; I worked for almost twenty years, and in the yes-sir-no-sir big company ships. But I own her from her keelson to her trucks, and I run the freight the big companies can't get or won't carry. . . . *Libertad,* Red; all the freedom any guy could want, and no orders from any bilge-bound dummy sitting in a pair of polished pants behind a desk in some shore office. And in a year now, two years more, I'll have enough jack stowed aside to say to hell with the sea, if I want to sell this one, swallow the anchor and live like a blinkin' toff."

Gunnar was straightening to his full height. He was moving, so that he could look down into the shorter and heavier man's eyes.

"Yeah," he said. "Dough that you've sweated out o' poor, no-good beach rats like them up for-ard now. Dough you've belly-robbed on short rations and short crews. Picking off butt-ends o' cargoes for prices and runs no decent man or company would touch. What the hell do you think you're proving? That for a pint of slop-chest whiskey you'll have me standing ten hours wheel watch, storm or no storm? While those guys up there are drawing the same pay as me, for less than half the work? Listen, Mister; you own this one; she's yours all right, and you brought her fine through that typhoon. But kidding me with a lot of hot bilge and a pint of bum liquor, and smacking them around the decks, that's not so smart, even for a dumb swab like you. Wait until you see what happens to you in Panama!"

In the position Gunnar had taken, they stood knee to knee, and almost eye to eye. But Donalds moved and laughed. He strode wide-legged towards the door of his quarters, and spoke back over his shoulder, not looking at the tall sailor:

"I've picked better bums than you off the beach in Panama every time I've needed them. But wait for Panama yourself, sailor; then ask for another look-see at the ship's articles, and see just how they read. You and these other pier-head jumpers will be working in this one long after Panama, and stow that right now. And now lay aft; get off my bridge!"

Gunnar was already halfway down the lower ladder, stopped and started back, a hot rill of anger in his brain. But the shattered screen door had opened, just slammed shut, and all he could do was curse the empty deck where they had stood together.

CHAPTER IV

"SO YOU THINK YOU'RE A SAILOR!"

THEY were more than a month on that long traverse to Panama, a span of long gold days and fragile silver nights filled with the murmuring of the Trades. And an odd kind of peace held the ship; men turned to and stood their watches, sat quietly at mess, slept easily, out on the open decks.

At his work of deck storekeeper, splicing wire and rope, sewing a new awning for the bridge, Yodin Gunnar found that he was singing old chanteys of the sailing ships from time to time, during his hours alone and was vaguely surprised, then angered at himself. It was, he said slowly aloud, all too easy to forget.

But MacDowie, the keg-like chief en-

gineer, explained that to him one night as he knocked off and came aft to supper; MacDowie was the one man with whom he talked. The engineer sat with his immense body propped against the coaming of number four hatch, a wash bucket holding soap-frothed shirts and drawers between his knees.

"Ye're happy, eh, man?" he said. "Ye're damned happy, just bein' in a good ship on the sea."

For a moment Gunnar did not answer him. He stood slowly rolling and lighting a cigarette.

"Yeah," he said then. "I guess so, Mac. Happy now; it's a great sea, this one."

"But ye're angered," said MacDowie, "when ye think on how Hard Johnny put it to ye back there, comin' out o' port, and it angers ye still more, t' think how he can do it again—most any time he wants, er the ship's work demands. Ye're not like the other lugs; ye think, out to sea. Three days out o' Panama Bay, they'll start gettin' the channel fever, and thinkin' of the dollars comin' to them, and how Johnny gave them th' hand and th' boot, weeks back. They'll all jump for th' beach in Panama, Red, and ye're angered at yeerself now because ye know ye've had peace, out here, but that it will be hell again, in port whether ye go with them, or whether ye stay aboard. . . ."

Yodin Gunnar laughed—at him and at himself. "That's it," he said. "You've got it all."

"I've seen a lot o' ships and a lot o' lads, Red," MacDowie rumbled, his head down over the bucket. "But there'll not be one o' them jumpin' this packet in Panama; Hard Johnny's to smart fer that, and yer articles read different. Keep yer head about ye there, Red, an' remember he's th' owner and th' skipper o' this one; it's his ship an' his articles."

"I just figured that." Gunnar was pitching his cigarette stub overside with a savage motion of his arm and hand. "And that those articles we signed read for two years—'from Manila to unnamed ports of call' . . . . He's smart, and he's hard, that *hombre*. But sometimes jaspers like him crack—right down the middle."

"Ye'll see, lad," said MacDowie dimly; "ye'll see. But t'is still th' open ocean here. Our bonnie Johnny's not th' man to call himself th' only winner yet."

"No, by God!" said Gunnar, laughing as he went on aft.

IT had been very brief and simple in Panama; so brief and so simple that for days afterwards most of them did not understand how it had happened, or why. Gunnar told them, the first night out, just as they were dropping the Cocos Islands astern and heading south for Talara.

"You're dumb," he said. "You were a stupid pack of swabs before you ever saw a shipside. He just outsmarted you—and me—all of us. Because you guys went on the loose in Panama, you got soused, and spent your dough and raised hell ashore in every joint you hit, then came back aboard and tried to make him pay you off. But you forgot that a skipper can't pay off in Panama; the guys running the zone won't let him; no man is allowed to bum on the beach there. So when you tried to jump, and beat it, he just told the Zone police, and they brought you back. But he got rid of his cargo there, he fixed his shipmates, and he ducked paying the canal tolls, and now he's putting down this way—along the lousy Guano Coast. And you'll take it, and you'll like it, and he'll make you do both. . . .Ah, pipe down! Don't talk to me! When you get grown mansize, lay for'ard and talk to him!"

They cursed him then, and they cursed him later, as, like beads on a dirty string, Johnny Donalds ran the ship from one grayly barren port to another. In Talara, they tried the same thing they had

essayed in Panama, and, drunken, shaky, numbed with the beatings they had received ashore, the police boat through them back, as it brought them back from Salaverry, from Molendo and Chanaral.

"He's got you," Gunnar told them. "He's not a real tough or smart guy, but he's tougher and smarter than you!"

It was in Valparaiso, a kind of frenzy of addled rage and hatred gripping them, that they made their last effort. They stole a boat that night, and rowed across the long roadstead. They piled ashore and spent their few dollars in the first grog-mill they came to, and when the police came in as the bottles and chairs started to crash, fought the police, struck, kicked and flung at anybody near them.

It cost Donalds nearly three thousand dollars in fines and settlements for that night, and a launch full of soldiers settled upon the ship with impounding papers until he paid it.

"All right," he said, standing in his little office midships and putting down the crisp American bills from his strong-box one by one. "It's worth it to me; bring 'em out, *caballeros*. Let me have 'em back!"

Another boatload of soldiers brought them out, and they could not walk, came crawling up the accommodation ladder on their hands and knees. Donalds stood by the midships rail and watched them, did not speak until the last soldier had gone into the launch and the launch pushed off.

"You forget," he said then. "You forget I'm Johnny Donalds, and that this is my ship. But, because of you, it just cost me three thousand bucks. So you'll pay for that; not me. We're bound for Michineros, down the coast here, and there's nothing there but sand and nitrates—no cops, no rum, no nothing. And we load nitrates there for New Orleans. Then we head for the Cape—for the Horn. No nice, warm canal for you, and no canal tolls for me this time. You'll have a Cape Stiff homecoming, and by the time you see the Gulf, you'll be able to call yourselves real sailormen. . . . You, Gunnar, lay for'ard and heave the hook up short!"

Gunnar stood aside, up against the break of the main house, his hands deep in the pockets of his faded dungarees, his cigarette between his lips. He smiled at Johnny Donalds, and made a nodding motion with his head towards the tangled group of stunned and sick men along the deck.

"You forget," he said. "I signed A. B. in this ship—not bosun—not mate. Bringing the hook up is the bosun's job, or a mate's. Find one of them for that, *hombre*. You can't kid me; I've seen the Cape more than once before. . . ."

For a second's passage, Donalds stared at him, his eyes hot, and heavy, his teeth bared between his broad lips.

"You'll remember it for a long time this trip, sailor!" he said, and then was in among the others, kicking them up into consciousness and action, but laughing softly as he moved.

IT was an unending horror, a permanent bruise upon their memories and their minds, that rounding of the Cape. Johnny Donalds let them learn there, the blood stiff on their cracked hands, their feet puffed masses of sores in their ripped boots, just how weak, how stupid and pitiful he had known them to be from the day they had come over the side of his ship in Manila. They feared him, and feared the Cape, the ice and the gray, awful seas, and they labored for him and for the ship. But the true sailorman strength, the intrinsic, natural courage was not in them, and they broke before it, lay finally, nearly all of them, in their wet and freezing bunks, even too tired to swear at him when he came below to turn them on deck.

It was Donalds himself, and red-headed Yodin Gunnar, helped intermittently and vaguely by the two haggard-eyed,

all but useless old senior mates, who brought the ship through. Donalds worked because it was his ship and he loved her, and was executing what he knew to be the most exquisite joke of his life. The shambling, stammering pair of mates worked driven by two vast fears: one of death here in these ice-clogged, roaring seas, the other, open, outright fear of Donalds and what he might do to them should they stop.

Yodin Gunnar worked because he was born a sailor, and this was a ship, this Cape Horn. He hated Johnny Donalds, he told himself then, but now he hated the sea more. He alternately cursed it and laughed mocking at it as he worked; even in the few hours of his sleep, a rigidity of anger against it rested in him.

And then, in the last night of their rounding, the steam steering gear froze; from the bridge and the wheelhouse, the helm was useless. One of the old mates found that out, screamed the fact through the battering of the wind and spindrift at Donalds and Gunnar, forward of him in the wheel-house.

A small smile warmed Gunnar's eyes as he heard it.

"You asked for it," he told the man at his side. "Now you got it; that compass for the hand wheel on the poop got carried full away yesterday. . . ."

Donalds turned, his hands up before him loosely.

"Get on that wheel aft," he said. "Step out! This compass works! I'll conn your course from here!"

"And," suggested Gunnar very softly, "I'll stand aft there in the open and freeze inch by inch, huh?"

As he spoke, a quartering sea hit the ship, boarded forward, heaved and hurled her down, let her come only groaning and stumbling back, tons of freezing water still aboard. Together, locked in each other's furious grip, the two went banging backwards, headlong over the deck and against the splintered chart-room door. Donalds was first on his feet and first towards the ladder below. Gunnar caught him just at the ladder, swung a wide blow at his head. The shorter man met it with his shoulder and upraised arm, took Gunnar's arm in a grip which made the bones creak.

"We stand it together!" Donalds said. "That swab in there can conn a compass—give us the course by deck telegraph!"

Gunnar did not answer him, he tried to pull his arm back and free. Then he saw the glint of Donald's teeth and eyes.

"All right," he yelled into the wind; "maybe you think you're a sailor!"

SIDE by side, they passed the rest of that night at the clumsy, head-high wheel, lashed to each other and to the standard of the wheel, ice cloaking them, only their mouths and eyes free. At dawn one of the mates came crawling aft along a life-line and told them he had just got a sight on the morning star; they could put the helm down now, bring the ship up. The Cape was astern. He pointed forward when he had finished telling them that, and they could see MacDowie, bare-headed and in his flapping boiler suit, leading two of his gang along the decks towards the frozen steam-steering lines with flaming blow-torches, and, behind the chief, a mess-boy who carried a huge pot of steaming coffee.

"Aye," said Donalds, the ice cracking on his lips. "But cut loose the lashings on us, ye swab! D'ye think we're here playin' a game of statues? Here!" Donalds paused to curse the mate roundly. "Take this man's knife off him. It's the one reason he's got for calling himself a sailor. Cut with that!"

* * *

The full, black memory of those days was still with them, but where they sat on the poop, they found that they could laugh a little now. Tuliano, the man of mixed blood, expressed it, jerking one of

his frost-blackened thumbs out towards the darkening, easy sea.

"W'en I come off wheel, we was well past them—t'e Falkland Islands. Gettin' warm quick now. *Nombre!* No more snow, no more h'ice; all wireless reports say that—good weather up ahead, right along. We be in South Trades in coupla days. *Muchissimo calor;* plenty hot. We just sit on deck an' tell that *roncin* take hees own ship into New Orleans. . . ."

Tuliano turned a little bit, looking quickly sidewise at where Gunnar sat, well apart from them and as though utterly alone. But the red-headed man did not seem to have heard the high-pitched, nasal words; he was up from the deck and over to the rail at the port quarter, straining out and standing at his full height. Then, beyond him, an image of utter loveliness upon the darkening sea, all of them saw it.

It was a sailing ship, a three-masted bark. She came slowly, majestically, wing-and-wing under studding sails and royals in these light airs. Aft there on the poop, they could hear the sudden slam on Donalds's door, then the man's rapid footsteps up the ladder to the bridge, his bark of command to the sailor at the wheel. Then from the wheelhouse topside the electric blinker signal flashed out in abrupt, white beams and across the small purple hills of the sea a flashlight answered back from the bark.

The two came slowly together, the bark pitching and rolling slightly with her yards hauled aback, Donalds bringing the steamer up within fifty fathoms before he stopped his engines. Then, leaning far out in his bridge wing, he cupped his hands and called the tall-sticked and lovely ship:

"You bound for the Cape?"

There was a solid line of figures along the poop rail of the bark, and in a flashlight's glow the steamer men could make out there the bright glint of uniform buttons and braid and the light dress of a young and slim woman. A happy kind of humor seemed to have been aroused by that boomed shout, for laughter came back across the water before a clear voice answered:

"That's it—none other! How'd you find the Cape down there?"

In his bridge wing, Donalds made a growling and profound sound, and roared:

"No place for fools! She's bad this year! Where you bound? What cargo you in?"

Again the soft laughter rose from the bark before the answer drifted over.

"Bound around the world! This is the old *Nianset!* No cargo—we're on pleasure cruise!"

The sound of Johnny Donalds's drawn breath was like a sigh. "If that's the old *Nianset* take her back where she belongs, to the boneyard! You'll find no pleasure down off Stiff with a woman aboard this time of year!"

The man who spoke from the bark raised both hands, shook them in a gay and mocking gesture over his head. "Thanks for the advice! But we've got a radio—two of 'em! If you're still around here and we need you, we'll send for you! Good luck, steam-sailor!"

"Good luck yerself, you bloody fool!" Donalds had already wheeled and grasped the handles of the engine-room telegraph beside him, roared an order at the sailor at the wheel. Aboard the bark a boatswain's whistle blew, blocks clacked as yards were squared and filled; then, dreamlike, apparitional in her dim loveliness, she was gone to the south.

CHAPTER V

THE BITE OF THE KNIFE

THEY were still talking of her, the old and exquisitely graceful windjammer, as first flailing gusts struck out of the darkness. They started rigidly then, remembering the Horn, and watching the

mess-kits and tin plates slide across the table as the big steel ship heeled over. Yodin Gunnar did not bother to curse them, or to rise.

"Sit down, you swabs," he quietly told them. "It's nothing but the after end of a Norther that broke up off the Rio plate. It'll blow hard and it'll blow plenty, but it's a squall and it'll pass quick. Our bonnie Johnny is up there on the bridge and he's looking for it; it was all in the weather reports. Sit down, and keep the mess-gear off the deck!"

Most of them sat then, but they did not eat, and they all came to their feet as the pop-eyed wireless operator jerked at the focsle door. The operator's hair was blown across his pimply forehead, water ran from his clothing, and in his hands he held a soaked yellow message flimsy.

It was, he said, wagging the sheet out at them hysterically, from the *Nianset,* the bark. He had just caught the message. Whoever owned that beautiful ship had hauled her in too close, allowed her too little seaway. Anyhow, the wireless operator said, speaking with painful slowness, she had just lost her fore and main topmasts, all her headsails, and the entire mizzenmast. Now, at the time this message had been sent, they were trying to keep her with three anchors back from the boil of surf off the ragged reefs of the Tierra del Fuego.

Munn, the ex-Navy man who once had tried to exhort Yodin Gunnar, lifted his filled plate and spun it hurtling against the far bulkhead.

"Nuts!" he said, veins showing blue about his eyes and throat. "Bilge to that! We're bound North—we're bound home! We done enough now! If that—"

He broke off, and his words degenerated into a whimpering, gargled sound in his throat. Johnny Donalds had just slipped in through the focsle door; he wore a yellow oilskin jacket and a sou'wester hat, but his clothing was dry. Behind him, through the open door, they saw that the wind and the driven spray were gone. He waited to speak until he was fully in the room. Then he talked to the Navy man, Munn:

"Put on your double gear. You're going aloft. You're going to stand lookout in the foremast bucket. Hit the deck! Up there, you can throw all the jaw-bone bilge you want."

Then he leaned back beside the door, his thumbs hooked in his broad leather belt, his eyes on all of them. Munn stirred one foot, then the other; he started to speak several times, his glance lifting to Donald's face; then he swore, but bent over his seabag as he pulled out the sweaters and heavy socks of his double gear.

Donalds preceded him through the door; Donalds led him up the ladder, and at the mess-bench the others sat staring obliquely until the two were gone along the main deck.

"He's going to put her about," husked the man who was Munn's watch-partner. "He's going back after the bark; that's why he's sendin' Munn aloft on mast lookout. Listen, Gunnar—"

The red-headed man had got up from the mess-bench and gone to his bunk. He sat on the edge of it now, stripping off his shoes and sweater, taking the long, bone-handled knife in its sheath from his belt and stowing it under his pillow before he turned in to sleep.

"Bilge," he answered. "He hasn't put her around yet. Wait until he does. Pipe down, you; this is my watch below." He pulled his feet and legs up as he spoke, dragged his shirt and trousers off, hung them over the line between the two bunk stanchions to keep the light of the room out of his eyes.

"Yeah; sure," Munn's watch-mate said. "It's your watch below, all right. But that son of a mule is figurin' t' head back and haul the bark off the rocks. He'll grab full salvage out o' that; he'll make a small fortune out o' her—an'

we're the guys who'll do his dirty work! For a few thousand lousy dollars, he'll run this one an' us right back off th' Cape into hell-bent trouble. You gonna stand for that?"

"I told you," Gunnar said, hitching the thin blankets up, "pipe down! Wait until he does, then see!" He reached down and with his big hand slapped the sand-filled wooden box beside his bunk which served as one of the focsle cuspidors. "Speak to me again, brass jaw, and I'll slap you with that; *comprendo?*"

They were quiet after that, hunched close together over the mess-table and talking among themselves. To him, still tired through all his brain and body by the days and nights of the Horn passage, their voices were first a low and dull murmuring, then a sibilance which joined with the sounds of the ship and sea in the first of his sound, deep sleep.

IT was Donalds' voice that woke him, Donalds' voice in anger. But already, through an instinctive sort of subconscious awareness, the heavier sleep layers had been lifted from him by the feel of the ship under him and the pounding of the steering engine as she had been heeled over in a wide changing of the course. He slid half upright in the bunk, then put his bare feet to the deck.

Donalds stood inside the focsle door. Loweck, one of the old senior mates and all of the deck force but Munn and Tuliano, the man on the wheel, gathered before him. Blood from a sharply gashed shoulder wound was clotted down one side of his oilskin jacket. The clearly marked abrasions a hobbed boot heel had made were across one cheek bone. Blood trickled from the knuckles of both hands and dripped spatting on the deck. He breathed swiftly, hoarsely, as though he had just been running. His voice was a hoarse, thick roar as his eyes swung to Gunnar's face:

"Break out, you. Stand up! Lay over there, with them! You're one with them now, and worse than them—you know a ship when you see one!"

"You," said Gunnar, looking first at the battered alarm clock above the focsle sink, "can go to hell!"

Donalds was at him then, in a clean and certain spring across the room, and in his hand he held Gunnar's bone-handled and initialed knife.

"Yeah?" he asked. "Yeah, sailor? This is still your watch below, but this is your knife! You joined with them just now; you led 'em! You came topside and tried to get me—tried to stop me from taking my ship where I want to take her, back after that poor pack of swabs in that bark! You're a sailor, you are, and you'd knife a man in the dark! Stand up, you yellow dog!"

Gunnar stood up slowly. He spread and set his feet. "I don't *savvy* this," he said. "I don't tumble at all. What the hell do you mean—I knifed you in the dark, that I'm with these guys, and that you're bound back after that bark?"

Donalds smiled, with his mouth and with eyes: an expression in which there was no humor and no warmth, and great hatred and absolute contempt. "Th' razzle-dazzle," he said. "You're trying to hand me that. . . . But, clip it short! Are you turning to, to get the hands off that bark—or do you want to stand up to me, along with this bunch of bilge-ants?"

Yodin Gunnar flexed the fingers and cords of his hands.

"No," he said. "I'm not turning to. No more fourteen-hour watches for me in this hooker on five-watch pay. Gi' me that knife; that's mine. And hand it easy, *hombre*. . . . I saw that operator's flimsy; there's ships in the Falklands that are closer to that bark than us. And if they're not, we can't get to her before she drags her hooks and breaks up on the reefs. You want salvage, you louse-bound son, that's all you want, while

guys like me do your work for it. . . . Gi' me the knife!"

Donalds moved a pace, sidewise and back. He spoke with his lips barely parted, in a whisper.

"Salvage, for a packet that wasn't worth three thousand in Lloyd's when that gang of crazy kids hauled her out of the boneyard. . . . You'd try to hand a salvage crack on me, and knife between th' ribs—when those kids and a woman are piling that fine old ship on th' beach down there. . . . Come and get your knife, you rotten rat!"

Point down, clinking and pricking sparks from the deck, Donalds dropped it exactly between them. Yodin Gunnar went for it, stooped and reached at once. And as he straightened, shoving it back into the sheath at his hip, Donalds laced him a full-shouldered, swinging right uppercut on the jut of the chin.

Gunnar spat blood and two smashed teeth as he crawled out from under his bunk. Then, coiled, swift, venomously eager, he was up and out at the other man. They fought all across the focsle, over the mess table and under it, and ended on the deck outside.

THAT was an unlovely fight. Gunnar was the taller, rangier, younger and better man. In the open of the well-deck, he was all around and over Donalds. He let him charge him, and tricked him as he charged, caught him with body jabs and quick lefts and rights for the face and throat. Then, in his moment, he charged. He hit four times, as Donalds, bloody, blown, tried to wheel and break free. Then, sprawling, Donalds went to the deck.

Gunnar stood over him; he asked him up, cursing him. Donalds came, plung-

ing, gathering his knees under him. Just as he was off his knees, Gunnar hit him again, with a blow that had about it the sound of a butcher's cleaver against bone. Donalds rolled over and over, and for a moment lay still. Then his hands crept out, and his feet took loose hold. Inch by inch, he dragged himself up, whispering, mumbling aloud in the black haze of his semiconsciousness.

"Ye'll go with me," he said. "Ye'll go with me, ye red-headed dog. . . . Yer th' one other sailor in the ship. Ye'll not stand back and see a lovely old one like that die on th' rocks; ye'll not see kids like that who can't even read a chart go down without a chance. . . . Ye hate me, sure—me. . . . But ye hate the sea more, and it's th' sea that's got them now, them kids who really wanted to be sailors. You'll go, ye dog! D' ye hear me—ye'll go!"

As though through a mist, he saw Gunnar before him. He peered at him with his bloodied and shocked eyes, mouthing some of those same words over again. He lifted his hands, his arms, he strode like a man who carried an immense weight, and he swung again at Gunnar's body. Gunnar stood unmoving, his face very white now, his eyes very dark. Those blows drummed the air about him; none of them hit him. But they took from the last underlying strength of John Donalds, and where he stood his knees gave and he twisted, fell sidewise back and over against the hatch.

Yodin Gunnar watched him for an instant, with an oblique and steady glance. Slowly then he started along the deck, to where the men from the focsle had stopped and grouped. He halted right before them, not more than several feet from the frontmost man. He moved his right hand back, and when he brought it forward, the knife was in his hand.

"You stole this from me," he said in a voice which lacked all color and inflection. "You swiped this from under my head while I was asleep. Then one o' you went topside and used it on that guy. You tried t' kill him, and frame me. Because you're afraid of him, and me, an' of the sea. You didn't want to go back after the bark; you thought you'd kill him and trick me, so you wouldn't have to. . . . But now you're going, and plenty *pronto*. You heard what he said, and yuh hear me now. It's his ship he's willing to take back there—a damn' good ship, worth five thousand like you, you two-bit scum. So get to it; lay for'ard. Break out the Lyle gun, break out those rockets in the lazarette, get the cover and the gripes off that boat on the monkey-island. I'm running this now; I'm takin' you back there. Get going, you guano-backs, or I'll put my initials on you with this one a foot deep!"

He turned the knife in his fingers once, and stirred his feet; then they ran before him, stumbling in their fear of him and their eagerness to obey his commands.

"All right," he said, bending down to heft Donalds up to his shoulder and start forward, "all right, sailor. We understand each other now. . . . You—and me—and those guys, too!"

CHAPTER VI

A DAMN' GOOD LIFE

THE reef was low, a jagged slash of black, bordered by the leaping frenzy of the white-boiled surf. Against it, the bark was a tragic shadow. She lay far over on one side. Her masts, all her standing rigging and houses were gone. The blackly sweeping hordes of the seas met her hullside squarely, smashing but not spending themselves, lipping up on and over, washing back in repercussion from the rocks of the reef.

Yodin Gunnar saw that when he brought the steamer in within a hundred fathoms of her, spoke down through the speaking tube to MacDowie on the control platform in the engine-room to hold

what he had for now. Then he went to the bridge wing, where in the anodyne of the open wind and spray, he had lashed Johnny Donalds to a stanchion. Donalds was nodding, mumbling, coming back to consciousness; half saw the tall man as he stepped beside him, mumbled:

"That th' bark?"

"That's the ticket you asked for, sailor," Gunnar said, his low voice caught by the wind, fretted away even before he himself could hear it. From the gearbox in the wing he had taken a rocket, held it in his hands. He raised it, leaning out, and let it go frothing up in a lambent casting of flame downwind and towards the bark. The stub was blackened, dull in his hands when the return rocket flared from the bark, and he cursed aloud, a pair of Donalds' night glasses jammed at his eyes.

"They're still aboard," he muttered to Johnny Donalds. "They're lashed to the quarter bitts on the poop. But they aren't good for five minutes more. And we're losing leeway here; we'll have to head up and out in a hurry. Fifty fathoms more, and we'll be piling up right where that one is."

Donalds made a grunting noise. "You got that surf-boat cleared on the poop?"

"Aye; she's all cleared and set outboard."

"You got hawsers broken out?"

"Four inch and six inch, for'ard and aft."

"Unbend this damned lashing on me then! Lay aft and get that boat and the four-inch ready. Give Mac a shout down the tube; tell 'm I'm going to come up in the wind an' then let her fall astern, so you can slack that boat astern and they can make a lee for it. I'll handle her up here; when I give you the whistle, pay out, let her run. I'll give those kids a rocket and they can stand by and grab her as she swings in. We can't bring 'em aboard, not in this surf. But they got some kind of a lee there under their own side yet, and they can pile in her and make the beach. We'll get 'em in the morning, if this breaks—"

"—Or if we can heave back out of here," Yodin Gunnar muttered. "Sure!" But then he grinned, bent forward against the wind, and turned running for the ladder head.

There was a bulb burning dimly in the alley-way of the main house as he came pounding aft. Beneath it, jammed between the galley and the door leading down to the engine-room, he found more than a score of men—firemen, oilers and sailors who had finished the jobs he had given to them an hour ago. Munn was among them, and Loweck, Tuliano and the pop-eyed wireless operator.

"Beat it th' hell out of here!" he boomed at them. "Gangway! Four of you guys—" he reached out and grasped them—"lay aft with me to the poop!"

"Listen, fella!" It was Munn, springing back from him and lifting a long Stillson wrench in his hands. "Ain't you had enough o' this? You gone full nuts? Five minutes more o' this, and we'll be piled up worse than that lousy bark!"

Gunnar seemed to stare away, and when he hit, struck with his left hand. Munn went to his knees and face, rolled once and was still. Loweck was the man to leap and kneel beside him; Loweck was weeping in an hysterical combination of rage and fear.

"Smack him!" he said. "Smack me! Go on aft and get your bloody boat away! But we've had enough, and we're going out of here! Try to stop us, you and your new sweetheart!"

"In five minutes," Gunnar said, shouldering through the men he grasped lumbering before him, "I'll be back. And if you're not still here, just like this, bilge-bound, I'll hitch those skinny shanks around your neck in a roving hitch! You'll get out o' here, all of you, but you'll wait 'til this job is done!"

HE had been working there on the poop in water that broke nearly constantly over his head and battered him to his knees time and again. For a while, he knew, the men he had brought with him had worked also, getting the big steel surf boat over the side and passing the first few bights of the hawser out as he commanded them. But wether they had gone now, whether they had deserted him and run forward, or whether the quartering seas had carried them over the side, he did not know; he was intent only on watching the jerking white passage of the empty boat down towards the bark.

He watched the boat, he talked to it as he would to a living thing, paying out the hawser which he made fast to it, seeing it rise and jounce against the overhang of the bark's stern, then sweep, spinning around on the brunt of a fresh comber, and go entirely from his sight. But a rocket crested up from the bark as he crouched there; they had the boat then, under their lee, were getting into it, were and would be safe. . . .

"Why the hell not?" he asked muttering of the sea and the night, feeling the taut turns of the hawser go slack against the bitts. He let go his grip upon the hawser then, he turned forward, and to the ship.

A man was coming towards him along the deck; he moved on his hands and knees, skidding and rolling as the seas thrashed aboard. Gunnar could see his face and the outline of his shoulders, and now he could feel the ship shudder and yaw under him. It was John Donalds, and Donalds was crying his name. He went forward to him, caught him and hauled him up.

"What's the matter?" he boomed in the wind. "What the hell are you doing here?"

Donalds was spent; the great powers of strength were weak and ebbed in him, but he spoke with a passion of emotion.

"They killed MacDowie," he said. "After you left 'em, they went below and killed MacDowie. They wanted the gun he had, and they wanted him to come and tell me to haul the ship off. Then they came up after me, with MacDowie's gun, and told me to turn the ship. . . . I killed a couple of them; I killed Munn, and Tuliano. But they're gone now, the swabs. They've grabbed the boats and gone; and they're drownin' out there now. . . ." Donalds gestured with his hand.

Gunnar drew his breath slowly as he stared, watching the big white steel boats as they whirled and lunged, far from the ship now, and broadside, broaching to the seas. One toppled, turned in that moment; he saw a tangle of legs, oar-sweeps and bodies, then even the boat was gone.

"They asked for it," he said in a flat and calm voice. "But they only took two boats."

"Yeah." Donalds was hauling himself along the deck, he was starting forward again. "They left the small, sweet one —the emergency boat, topside. I saw to that; I fought 'em for it. Come on, sailor; this is all over now. . . ."

The ship reeled, helmless, powerless, in her death agony as they came up the ladder to the lower bridge.

"Get her outboard, Red," Donalds said, jerking his bowed head towards the neat-lined little boat in her gallows; "swing her out while I get a compass from the bridge. . . ."

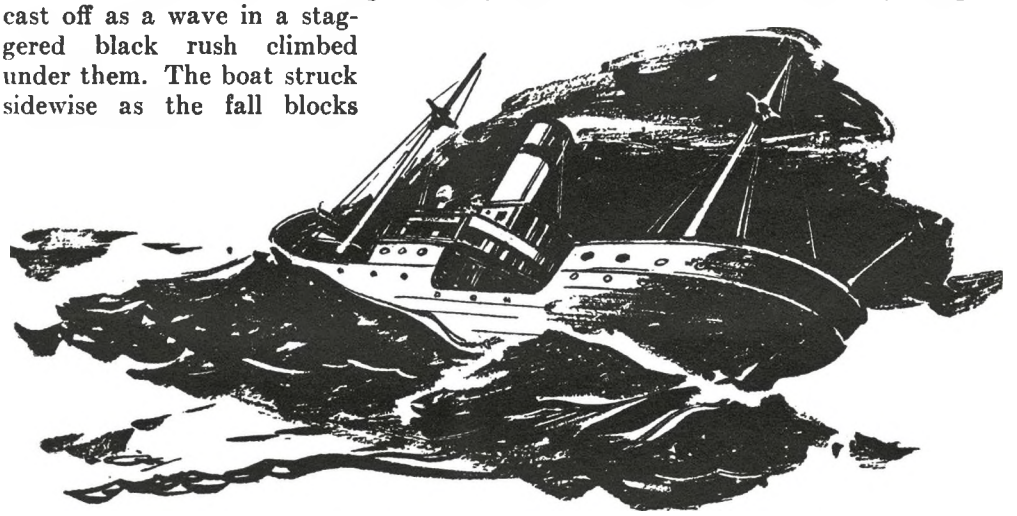
He had her outboarded, the cover whipped away and the row-locks shipped before Donalds came back off the bridge. He stood crouched and stared astern, seeing the second of those two other boats from her lift, drop and be smothered swiftly; saw, then, from the mounted clash of the surf beyond the black hulk of the bark inshore, the curved flash of a rocket. The bark's people were safe; they had made the beach, and that was their sign. . . .

DONALDS half rolled, half fell down the ladder from the flying bridge. But in his hands, up against his chest, he carried a bulky oil-skinned packet, and he spoke at once.

"We got no lot of time," he said. "This one is going to pile right up over the bark. Let her go by the run, Red!"

"By the run!" Gunnar said after him. "But lay aboard, you swab! We can't beat that surf! We'll have to head up and out for it, for the open water!"

They slacked the falls of the boat together; they let them go by the run, cast off as a wave in a staggered black rush climbed under them. The boat struck sidewise as the fall blocks



flailed up free; she dipped and lunged, then dropped through an immense chute of screaming darkness. In that darkness, dragging over the midships thwart, Gunnar found his hands upon the others body, Donalds' face within inches of his own.

"Break out and step that mast forward!" Donalds yelled at him. "Let go the cloth! It's the only way we can beat up and out! Get to it—I'll handle the sweeps here! I'll keep her head up until you got it rigged!"

Gunnar fought the mast and sail as he would fight a man, with a steady shrewdness, a passionately controlled cunning. He stepped the mast in water over his knees; he let a corner of the sail go, and came clambering aft with the sheet-line belayed about his shoulder. Donalds was on the midships thwart; his back was bowed and his feet bent against the sixteen-foot sweeps which held the boat's head up and for this moment safe.

"Stand by to come around!" Gunnar yelled at him. "I'm going to bring her over now!"

"It's time!" Donalds said. "Now's your time, Red!"

Gunnar looked aft, the sheet-line dragging at his arm, the big steering sweep he had just sent outboard bucking against his ribs. John Donalds' ship was right astern of them; foundering, already beaten, she loomed, lurching and lifting in deadly arcs of motion. Ahead, a heaving line's length away, was the reef where the bark had died.

"Now!" Gunnar said, and fell upon the steering sweep and the ice-cased sheet-line. "Now, my God!"

A tremoring which was all but human went through the boat; the bow heeled, caught the wind full, yawed off, yawed back, and swung up, lifted climbing buoyantly, lightly into what had been the following sea. Gunnar let his breath go. He tried to laugh, and made no

sound. From his shoulder, he led the sheet to the gunwale cleat, made fast his turns there, set himself lower at the steering sweep.

"We win," he whispered, knowing John Donalds could not hear him, and then was silent, gazing upon and gauging the open sea ahead, his eyes slitted in a glancing which encompassed Donalds, where the man sat rowing yet.

THE dawn broke for them over a falling sea. The light was pearl and silver, then a white gold which brought a little dim heat. Yodin Gunnar moved his feet and his body, lifted a bight of the sheet-line and becketed the steering sweep in its crotch.

"Let go of them," he said heavily to the other man. "Bring 'em inboard. We eat now, and we get some sleep. She'll ride like this all day."

Donalds lifted his head and tried to smile. "Where you bound for, sailor?"

"Where," Gunnar was stretching his aching body, "you want to go?"

Donalds turned his head towards the canvas-wrapped packet under the thwart.

"I got it all," he said slowly, "all we need. There's a good magnetic compass in there, and two thousand good dollars. This one's got food and water in her lockers to keep two guys a long time —two, three months. You know the islands up North, Red; you call yourself for a West Indian man. What do you say we put her up for there?"

"Why?" Yodin Gunnar asked him in a low, quick voice. "Then what?"

"Then you and I go partners—you and Hard Johnny Donalds. I lost that one, sure. But there's always more ships, and this two thousand bucks to put down for one. Why not one of those sweet little two-stick schooners, running in the islands? That's a good life for a sailor."

"That's a damn good life," said Yodin Gunnar, wide-eyed, whispering. "But bring those sweeps in, man; get your hands off 'em for a while."

In the white sunlight, John Donalds smiled, and his eyes went from the other man's face to the knife at his hip.

"Come on along for'd," he said, "and bring the knife, Red. I didn't want to lose in this one last night; there'd been enough losin' already. So I stuck my hands overside, then let 'em freeze here on the thimbles. You were rigging that sail, and if I'd dropped a sweep then, we'd 've gone along after those other swabs. There's once in a while a sailor needs a knife, and I figured you'd still have this one."

"I got it," Gunnar said. He had it out in his grip, was bending down over the ice-clogged sweeps, the cramped lock of the bluely congested hands. "But when we hit the islands, you get this one. You're the guy who told me that only a bum sailor ships without one." For an instant, he lifted his head, and they smiled, steadily into each other's eyes, over the knife.

James B. Hendryx

JASE QUILL—SURGEON

WHEN the two half-breed brothers McCracken slipped into Dawson and recorded claims on a creek they called Little Tamarack, no one in the big camp got excited, even though the breeds paid for their drinks in coarse gold. But when, a month later, Burr MacShane filed on the same creek, and whispered a word into the ears of a few sourdoughs, he started a stampede that made history in the Yukon.

The fact that each and every one of the sourdoughs had good claims on Bonanza, or Hunker, or Ophir, deterred them not one moment. A good claim on any of those creeks was a sure thing. But a new creek was a gamble!

"I panned nearly a dollar right out of the grass-roots," imparted MacShane, to the little group of sourdoughs that had forgathered near one end of the Tivoli bar on that hot July night. "She might be another Bonanza!"

"Let's go!" breathed old Bettles, dean of the sourdoughs, as he pounded on the bar for a round of drinks.

"Where's this here Little Tamarack at?" queried Moosehide Charlie. "I ain't never heard of no sech a crick."

"It's quite a piece back," answered MacShane. "I run onto it accidental, from the north. I followed up the Klondike till I run out of water somewheres up agin the divide, an' then turned south with a pack. I crossed a lot of spurs an' then started follerin' down this crick which I figgered was a branch of the McQuesten. It was then I run onto the

McCracken stakes, an' I done a little pannin'. An' like I said, I began scoopin' her right out of the grass-roots. I socked in my stakes, an' hit on down the creek. That evenin' I run onto some Siwashes an' traded' em out of a canoe, an' come on down. Two days later I hit the McQuesten—an' here I be."

"What's the best way to go—like you went? Er like you come back?" asked Camillo Bill.

Hell's fire!" exclaimed MacShane, "After I left the Klondike, I wandered around amongst them damn mountains fer thirteen days—an' was lost every minute of the time. If we foller up the Stewart an' the McQuesten, we've got water all the way! It would be about two hundred an' fifty mile, I figger."

"I'm like Bettles," observed Swiftwater Bill. "Let's go!"

In the Yukon, in July, night is night in name only. Thus it was that despite their utmost precautions, the midnight exodus of the sourdoughs from Dawson was the signal for a general stampede of chechakos, who trailed along in the wake of the old timers in whatsoever manner of craft they could buy, borrow, or steal. Many of these dropped out of the race, but it was a long line of poling boats and canoes that finally beached on the banks of the Little Tamarack.

The sourdoughs and a few of the hardier chechakos made the run in twenty days and got their stakes in close above and below Discovery. New arrivals poured in daily, so that by the middle of August the creek was staked from its mouth to the source of its every little dry gulch and feeder.

And from the first the camp prospered. As MacShane had said, coarse gold lay close to the grass-roots, and before the first snow whitened the North Country the camp of Little Tamarack boasted a trading post of sorts, two saloons with their inevitable dance-halls, and a "Bon Ton Restaurant."

September that year was a mild month of golden sunshine softened by the purple haze of Indian Summer, with only an occasional snow flurry to portend the ice-bound months to come. And, in the shortening days, men worked feverishly from daylight to dark in the building and banking of cabins, and in surface-stripping their claims to get out all the gold possible before the freeze-up.

THEN, on the very last day of the month, winter gripped Little Tamarack. The wind whipped suddenly into the north, and the drizzling rain of the forenoon changed to fine flinty flakes of snow that bit and seared the flesh like sparks of hot iron, and by evening a howling blizzard had driven men to the shelter of their cabins, or to the saloons.

In the "Aurora Borealis," Old Bettles raised his glass tipsily and burst forth into a song as Burr MacShane closed the door against a cloud of swirling snow and advanced to the bar, beating the snow-powder from his clothing with his fur cap.

"In the days of old,
In the days of gold,
In the days of forty-nine!" quavered the oldster, in a shrill falsetto. "Come on an' licker up, Burr. This here's goin' to be a four-day norther!"

"It looks like you'd got a pretty good start," grinned MacShane, with a wink at Swiftwater Bill.

"Hell—I seen her comin'," explained Old Bettles. "Yer damn right—an' I didn't take no chances! You got to take time by the fetlock, as the old sayin' goes. When that wind changed this noon, I hit right out fer here. 'We got to git three, four days of stud played.' I says, 'an' we might's well be gittin' at it.'"

"Where's Moosehide Charlie an' Camillo Bill?" queried MacShane, glancing about the room. "Stud ain't no good three-handed. Besides, I ain't et yet."

"Camillo an' Moosehide ain't showed up," said Swiftwater Bill. "But there's big Jase Quill over by the wheel. He's set in the game before, an' he don't play 'em so bad, for a chechako."

"He's a chechako, all right—an' yet he ain't," replied MacShane. "He's a damn good man with a canoe. Hell, he was right on our tail when we got here! Handled his canoe alone, too, an' believe me, two hundred an' fifty mile of up-river paddlin', keepin' up with us sourdoughs, ain't no job fer a chechako. He got him a good claim, too—right alongside of Moosehide's. An' Moosehide says he shore knows his stuff when it comes to cabin-buildin'. Showed *him* a couple of tricks. He says Jase told him he come from Minnesoty, up in the iron-minin' country."

"Iron-minin'!" scoffed Old Bettles. "Cripes, a man would have to sluice out a hell of a lot of iron to make wages! Mebbe that's how he got so big. It would take all the iron a big man could pack to buy a drink!"

"Hell, they don't sluice out iron an' pack it around with 'em! Jase told how they load the ore into railroad cars with a steam shovel, an' haul it out a trainload to a time, an' melt it down in a blast furnace."

"Be a damn good way to mine gold, too," chuckled Old Bettles, "if a man had a railroad, an' a steam shovel, an' a blast furnace. A couple of train-loads, an' he wouldn't have to give a damn."

"Looks like Jase is cashin' in," observed Swiftwater Bill. "The houseman's weighin' him out some dust."

Even as he spoke, the big chechako turned from the wheel and approached the bar, white teeth flashing behind his chestnut beard, above which twinkled a pair of shrewd gray eyes.

"Fill 'em up agin, boys," he invited, tossing a well-filled pouch onto the bar. "That is, if you old-timers'll drink with a chechako."

"We'll shore drink with you," replied Old Bettles. "We was jest sayin' how you was a damn sight more promisin' than the general run of chechakos. When you learn to let the wheel an' the faro bank alone, we might almost figger you fer a sourdough. Take poker, an' stud—a man plays his own cards. But them others is house games. It's a damn good rule to foller: Never play the other feller's game."

The smile behind the chestnut beard widened.

"I jest took the wheel for forty ounces. Them house games is all right if you've got the system."

"System!" scoffed Bettles. "There ain't no system! Hell, I bought a system off'n a fella, onct. Down to Forty Mile, it was. I copied down the numbers jest like he said an' in two nights I was broke. An' I've saw other systems played, an' not a damn one of 'em worked. The one that plays 'em always goes broke."

"My system's simple," grinned Jase Quill, filling his glass. "It consists in cashin' in when yer ahead of the game. If a man plays that system, he can't lose."

MacShane and Swiftwater Bill chuckled, as Old Bettles frowningly endeavored to concentrate on the problem.

"But how the hell's he goin' to git ahead in the first place?" he asked.

"That's owin' to the numbers he bets on," replied Quill gravely. "Of course, if he goes ahead an' bets on the wrong numbers that ain't the fault of the system."

"Throw that drink into you, an' have one on me," grinned Bettles. "Then we'll go an' git us a bite to eat, or we'll be runnin' behind with our stud. Fer a chechako, you ain't so bad."

The four drank, and as they turned toward the door, MacShane called over his shoulder:

"Hey, barkeep! If Camillo Bill er

Moosehide shows up, tell 'em we're over to the restaurant!"

As they bored through the smother of whirling snow, Swiftwater Bill placed his lips close to Old Bettles' ear and indicated the blur of light that showed across the crooked street:

"Mebbe they stopped in to the 'Caribou'," he shouted.

"What!" yelled Bettles. "With all them wimmin and' chechakos that hangs around there! Not by a damn sight! Camillo an' Moosehide is serious minded. They'd be huntin' a stud game!"

SEATED at a table, a few minutes later, MacShane nodded toward the waitress that was just vanishing into the kitchen, a tray of dirty dishes balanced on her hand.

"There's a husky lookin' female," he observed. "I ain't seen her around here."

"She ain't be'n here long," said Swiftwater. "Miss Lenna Kinkaid, her name is, an' she's jest as husky as she looks, too. Some chechako tried to git fresh with her the first day she come, an' she fetched him one on the side of the head with the flat of her hand that knocked him clean out of his chair an' damn near squshed his ear."

The waitress reappeared with a handful of knives, forks, and spoons which she proceeded to distribute in front of the four.

"Ain't that so, sister?" he grinned.

"Ain't what so?" asked the girl, without pausing in her work of distribution.

"I was jest tellin' the boys how you damn near knocked that chechako through the wall the other day with a one-handed slap. I was afraid they mightn't believe it."

"No? Well, there's an easy way of findin' out. I saved one hand for sourdoughs. What you goin' to have to eat? We've got moose stew. Bread, coffee, an' potatoes throw'd in."

"In the stew?" asked Bettles.

"If you want it that way," replied the girl, without batting an eye. "I used to slop hogs back on the farm."

"Ye'r too fast fer me," replied Old Bettles, amid the laughter of the others. "An' jest fetch the stuff in separate, if it's all the same to you."

As the girl disappeared into the kitchen, the front door opened and a muffled figure stamped into the room, beating the snow from its clothing.

"Damned if it ain't Moosehide!" exclaimed Swiftwater Bill. "Shove together, boys! Come on, Moosehide. Fetch a chair, an' set in. Where's Camillo?"

The girl returned with the thick porcelain dishes of steaming stew as Moosehide Charlie seated himself.

"Fetch me some of the same, sister," he ordered.

"Where's Camillo?" demanded Old Bettles. "How the hell we goin' to git any stud played with you fellas stringin' along 'way in the middle of the night?"

"'Taint only seven o'clock," reminded Moosehide, consulting his watch. "At that, I'd be'n here quicker if it hadn't be'n fer Camillo. I stopped in to his shack fer to git him to come on along, an' found him doubled up in his bunk with the bellyache."

"The bellyache!" exclaimed Bettles. "Cripes! Ain't he got no whisky?"

"Yeah, he's drunk about a quart in the last couple of days. He claims it don't do no good."

"A quart! Two days!" cried Bettles. "No wonder it didn't do him no good! Hell, that ain't a dose fer a well man, let alone a sick one! Why don't he drink him some whisky?"

"He claims it don't help him none," reiterated Moosehide. "He seems kind of sick, at that. His eyes is sort of glary lookin', an' his forehead was hot when I laid my hand on it—like he's runnin' some kind of a fever. I heard talkin' when I stopped at his door, an'

I thought some of you boys was in there, only there wasn't no light lit. An' when I went in, there wasn't no one only Camillo, an' he was talkin' out loud there in the dark.

"Seems like he was kind of out of his head, 'cause he was augerin' with some woman which he was callin' her 'dearie' an' 'sweetheart' an' talkin' awful nice to her. Only there wasn't no woman to talk to—an' even if there was, Camillo wouldn't never talk to no woman like that. He's plumb onheedful of wimmin. I tried to git him to come on along, but it wasn't no use, so I filled up his stove with wood, an' emptied his slop bucket, set the water pail where he could reach it handy, an' come away."

"A good physic is what he needs," opined Jase Quill, who had been an interested listener. "Yup, a good dost of salts, an' then foller it up with a dost of ippykak. That'll clean him out, an' then, if his belly ain't no better, he kin chaw a piece of opium fer to relieve the pain. It might be he's got the inflammation of the bowels.

"We kin get salts over to the store," said Moosehide, "but opium, an' that there other stuff you said—we can't git none of that on Little Tamarack."

Interested in learning of Camillo Bill's illness, none of the sourdoughs noticed that the waitress stood drinking in every word, entirely unheedful of Moosehide Charlie's order. All eyes turned on her in surprise as she cut crisply into the conversation.

"You're not goin' to give that man any dose of salts till I've had a look at him! He might have an acute attack of appendicitis—and a physic would kill him!"

"Fer Gawd's sake, miss!" exclaimed Old Bettles. "Be you a doctor?"

"No, I'm not a doctor! I'm a nurse —an' a damn good one, too! I've had seven years' experience in one of the biggest hospitals in Chicago. An' when the war broke out, last year, I signed on for service in Cuba. But, instead of that, they shipped me down to Chickamauga to a rotten, undermanned hospital, to help take care of a lot of green recruits that didn't know a cannon from a fire-plug, an' had ought to been arrested, instead of hospitalized, for the diseases they got! I says 'to hell with their damn war—if that's the way they're goin' to run it'! An' I packed my grip and beat in. I didn't dare to apply for a job in any hospital in the States, on account of my record couldn't help but show I walked out on their war, an' they might stick me in prison, or somethin', for desertin'. So I got in on the gold rush. Got a claim filed here, too, but I figured biscuit shootin' was an easier job than winter minin', so, here I am. You bet, little Lenna's used to lookin' out for herself, in this man's world! They say I'm hard-boiled, an' maybe I am. But I've stayed decent, an' I've paid my own way, an' I ain't starvin' to death on no North Dakota farm, like my sisters are. So what the hell!"

"They got a hospital started in Dawson," reminded Swiftwater Bill.

"Yeah—an' they've got a full staff of nurses, too. Anyway, if my claim's any good, I can make more money diggin' gold than I could nursin'. But at that I ain't goin' to stand around an' let you numskulls kill a man, if I can help it."

"What d'you mean—numskulls?" exclaimed Jase Quill. "By cripes, young woman, I'll have you to know I'm a doctor—an' my daddy was a doctor before me—an' a damn good blacksmith, to boot! I learnt all about medicine from him, an' when he died I done a lot of doctorin' up along the iron range in Minnesoty, an' amongst the loggin' camps! An' not only I doctored men, but a lot of horses, too!"

"I never nursed any horses," sneered the girl, "an' as a doctor, your old man was prob'ly a damn good blacksmith."

"You bet he was—an' a damn good doctor, too! An' I'm as good as he was. He taught me all he know'd."

"It prob'ly didn't take him long," the waitress sniffed. "Inflammation of the bowels! That's the name those old fogies had for everything from colic on through appendicitis to peritonitis!"

"Is that so? Well, let me tell you, I've cured plenty of horses of the colic —an' I've saw plenty of folks die of the inflammation of the bowels!"

"I'll bet you have!" agreed the girl. "But you ain't goin' to get the chance to see this man die of it if I can help it! At that, if it's appendicitis, there's prob'ly nothin' that'll save him but an operation. You don't claim to be a surgeon, do you?" she asked, sarcastically.

"No, mom, I don't. But, take it with inside an' outside medicine, like physic an' liniment, I've had pretty good luck. I've had some folks die on me, of course, but so has every doctor. I always read up on a case when I looked it over, an' done the best I could. My book is up to the shack—an' my medicines, too—in the same old leather satchel my dad carried 'em around in. 'The Family Physician An' Household Remedies Fer Man and Beast, To Which Is Appended a Hundred Good Receipts fer the Housewife,' is the name of it. An' it tells how to cure all the diseases there is. It even tells how to shear sheep, an' what to do if you cut one."

"I'm afraid what we need is a surgeon," repeated the waitress. "The chances are that appendix has got to come out."

"Old Doc Pettus is over to Mayo," ventured Swiftwater Bill. "But Mayo's a good hundred mile from here an' old Doc couldn't make it in a storm like this."

"No, an' he wouldn't do no good when he got here," said Bettles. "I ain't got no faith in him an' his rusty instruments. Hell! The last two, three men he operated on died of blood pizen."

"That's right," agreed Moosehide. "When the new horspital come to Dawson, old Doc pulled out fer Mayo. He claimed they was too newfangled to suit him."

"Shore they be!" agreed Quill. "That's the trouble with these here doctors, they're newfangled. It stands to reason an old man knows more than a young one. An' the cures fer all the diseases is all wrote up already. So all these here young doctors does is to experiment with human life. What I claim, it ort to be put a stop to!"

"If it wasn't fer this damn blizzard we might git Camillo down to the horspital in Dawson," said Swiftwater Bill.

The nurse shook her head.

"No, he'd never make it, if he's as sick as I'm afraid he is. His appendix would rupture before you could reach Dawson."

"I cured a rupture, onct," stated Jase eagerly. "A lumberjack, it was, an' somethin' busted in his stummick an' let part of his guts stick out agin his hide. I worked 'em back into place an' made a kind of a truss that worked till he could git to Minneapolis fer a proper one."

THE SNEER faded from the young woman's eyes, and she regarded the speaker seriously.

"Do you know anything about the appendix at all?" she asked.

"No, mom, I don't. But I kin read up about it. Sence you mentioned it, I rec-lect that the last part of my book is all about the appendix. I never paid no attention to it, though, 'cause it seemed like that part was all filled in with them housewife receipts."

"To hell with your book!" cried the girl. "It ought to be throw'd in the stove! Didn't you ever do any surgery, at all?"

"None to speak of, mom. The only

time I kin remember was a horse up to Shevlin's Camp Thirty-three. He got loose an' got into the feed bin an' et till he was all bloated out like a balloon. They sent fer me an' I couldn't git nothin' through him at first, but he kep' on swellin' up till I thought he'd bust, an' he was gruntin' an' sufferin' somethin' turrible, so I whet up my jack knife an' jobbed it into his flank clean the len'th of the blade, an' you'd ort to heard that wind whistle out!"

"Did the horse live?" asked the girl, tight lipped.

"Shore he did! Any damn fool could kill a horse by jabbin' a knife into him! He got well as ever. Fine big animal, too. Would of be'n too bad to lose him!"

"But you never operated on any human?"

"No, mom. But I could, jest as well as not. If I couldn't find this here kind of a case in my book, mebbe you could be there an' kind of help me out. You must of seen cases like that in the horspital if you worked in one fer seven years, like you claim."

"I've seen hundreds of 'em," replied the girl.

"How'd they come out?"

"What?"

"I mean what luck did they have with 'em? Did the folks git well that they operated on?"

"Of course they got well! Once in a great while we'd lose one from peritonitis."

"That ain't no sign we'd lose none from Little Tamarack," opined Jase. "Hell, mom, accordin' to that, the odds is all in our favor!"

The nurse shuddered. "It's possible," she said, "that an operation won't be necessary. I think I can tell when I look him over."

"Shore," agreed Quill, "it don't do no hurt to look 'em over before you doctor 'em. Chances is a good physic'll fix him up. It's prob'ly somethin' he et."

The girl turned to Moosehide Charlie.

"Where was this pain? Did he tell you?"

"He claimed it was the bellyache."

"I know. But was the pain low down or high up? Was it continuous or intermittent? Was it more to the right side or the left?"

"Oh—he didn't say. But, from the shape he's in, it prob'ly takes in his whole belly."

The girl stamped her foot angrily. "What chance have we got if an operation is called for? No anesthetic! No instruments! No nothing!

"I've got a hull bottle of chloroform," said Quill. "There ain't only a little bit gone out of it."

"Chloroform!" cried the girl. "What are you doin' with chloroform, if you never operate?"

"I got it about the last thing before I come away," explained Quill. "The Widder Espy's cat got the fits an' she wanted I should kill it. I was goin' to shoot the damn thing, but she wanted it chloroformed an' bein' as she give me two dollars, besides payin' fer the chloroform, I done it that way."

"Well, thank God for that!" cried the nurse.

"But, hell, mom, we don't want to kill this fella, jest because he's got the bellyache! That cat couldn't 've got well, nohow."

"I'll tend to the anesthetic!" snapped the nurse. "You get that chloroform!"

"Shore! I'll fetch it along. It's in the satchel, along with the rest of the medicine. An', about instruments, now. You claimed we didn't have none. There ain't no bones to cut through, is there?"

"No, of course not!"

"Well, then, it looks like a knife is all we'd need. I'll whet mine up good an' sharp."

"Yes, but how about forceps an' surgical needles an' antiseptic gauze?"

"I ain't got none of them things," admitted Quill.

"I've got two, three pair of long-nosed

pliers." said Swiftwater Bill. "An' if you mean them curved needles like doctors has, we kin heat a common needle in a candle, an' bend it any shape you want it."

"All right!" cried the girl. "It's the best we can do. Hurry up an' throw this grub into you an' get busy. We won't be able to get any gauze, but one of you go over to the store an' get a few yards of cheesecloth, or muslin, or whatever white goods they've got, an' a spool of heavy linen thread, an' we can boil it up."

She turned to Jase Quill:

"You get that chloroform an' put a razor edge on your knife. I'll go an' get dressed. How far is it to this man's shack?"

"Oh, it's up the crick a piece. Mebbe half a mile. We got plenty time to git there whilst Jase is gittin' his stuff. He's got to go a couple mile further up, an' back to Camillo's. It'll take him quite a while, the way the storm is."

"I'll go with him," volunteered Burr MacShane. "Two men's better'n one, in a storm like this."

"I'll go git the stuff at the store," offered Swiftwater Bill.

"I'll fetch along two-three quarts of whisky," said Bettles, "in case he'd need a mite of stimulant."

"How about light?" asked the girl. "W'ell want plenty of light if we have to operate."

"Samillo's got a lamp an' I'll fetch mine when I git my pliers," said Swiftwater, "an' pick up a couple of lanterns at the store. Moosehide, he'll stay here an' help you up to Camillo's shack. It's owly as hell outside."

The food disappeared in noisy haste, and all but Moosehide departed on their various errands. He was presently joined by Old Bettles who returned from the saloon, a huge package under his arm, and by Swiftwater Bill, whose shack was only a short distance from camp.

As the girl descended the stairs from her quarters above and stepped into the room, dressed for the trail, the proprietor of the restaurant entered from the outside, and stood blinking in the bright lamplight.

"What's all this?" he demanded, his eyes traveling from his well-muffled waitress to the table littered with dirty dishes. "Where do you think you're goin'?"

"Listen—you!" retorted the girl, taking a step toward him, her eyes flashing. "There's a man layin' desperately sick in his shack, half a mile above here, an' I'm goin' to see what I can do about it! An' if you don't like it you can take your damn restaurant an' go to hell! I hired out for a biscuit-shooter an' I've done a good job! But first of all, I'm a nurse! See!"

The man's eyes twinkled above his thick beard, upon which the melted snowflakes sparkled like tiny diamonds.

"Yeah! An' you listen to me, sister!" he rumbled. "If you show up here agin, as long as ye're needed there, you won't have no more job than a rabbit! We'll git along, all right, till you git back. Me an' the cook an' the dishwasher'll make out some way. An' if the customers don't like it, they kin go to hell!"

WITH Old Bettles leading the way through the inky blackness, rendered absolutely opaque by the smother of whirling, stinging snowflakes, the girl followed, supported on either side by Moosehide Charlie and Swiftwater Bill. There was no trail. Heads bowed to the wind, they stumbled on, tripping and wallowing through waist-deep drifts, and slipping helplessly on wind-swept patches of ice. Time and again they fell, only to get up and stagger on.

Forty minutes of battling the storm brought them to Camillo Bill's cabin, where Moosehide Charlie held a match to the wick of the tin bracket lamp which flared up and cast a sickly yellow

glow over the interior. Removing their outer clothing, the two men jumped to obey the girl's orders.

"Get more light in here. Get a good hot fire goin', an' put on a pail of water to boil. Pull out that table an' fix it someway so his legs will lie out flat when we lay him on it. An' one of you get busy and bend a couple of these needles in a half circle. What did you do with that grip of mine? I'll have a look at the patient."

Moosehide handed her the grip, from which she took a clinical thermometer and thrust it beneath the patient's tongue as she seated herself on the edge of the bunk and took his pulse.

"A hundred an' two-tenths," she muttered a few moments later as she held the thermometer to the light, "an' a fast pulse."

She turned to the patient, whose eyes were following her with a dull, wondering look.

"I'm a nurse," she smiled. "Your friend, here, told us you were sick, an' we came up to see what we could do."

"It's the bellyache," muttered Camillo Bill. "But, I never had it so bad, before. Nor fer so long a time."

"Yes. I'm goin' to look you over in a minute. But first tell me: How long have you had it?"

"It's two days, now. It come all of a sudden, but the first day it wasn't so bad. That night it got worse, though. An' it don't seem to let up none. It hurts more when I move."

"I see. An' where is the pain? Is is low down, or high up, or where?"

"It seems like it's low down, an' mebbe a little more over to the right."

"Feel sick to your stomach?"

"Yes'm. I throw'd up considerable in that old bucket, there. Moosehide, he emptied it fer me, an' I ain't got nothin' up sence. Seems like there ain't no more in me to come up. I ain't ett for a couple of days."

"I see. I'm goin' to loosen your belt, now, an' try an' locate the trouble. I want you to tell me where it hurts worst."

Slipping her hand beneath the man's clothing, her exploratory fingers exerted a gentle pressure.

Suddenly, the man winced. "Ow! That's the sorest spot—right where ye're at, now."

"I thought so," replied the girl, withdrawing her hand. "It's acute appendicitus—an' a bad case. The only chance we've got is to operate."

"Yes, mom," answered the patient weakly. "Well, go ahead. I can't feel no worse than what I do."

"We're not quite ready, an' besides, the doctor's not here, yet," answered the nurse. "Just take it easy. It won't be long, now."

"Doctor!" exclaimed Camillo Bill, raising himself weakly to his elbow. "You mean Old Doc Pettus? 'Cause if you do, there ain't a-goin' to be no operation. Not on me, there ain't! Them damn old rusty tools of his has got blood pizen onto 'em. Leastwise, the folks he cuts into all dies of it! If yer dependin' on him to operate, I'll jest lay here an' die of the bellyache!"

"No, no!" soothed the girl. "It's not Doctor Pettus. It's Doctor Quill. He'll be here directly."

"Never heard of him," said Camillo, sinking back on his pillow.

"Shore you have," explained Old Bettles. "You know Jase Quill. That chechako that hung right on our tail all the way up from Dawson, an' filed in next to Moosehide."

"Oh—him! Hell, I didn't know he was a doctor."

"Neither did none of the rest of us, till he up an' told us in the restaurant this evenin'. His pappy was a doctor before him, an' a blacksmith, to boot. An' this here Jase learnt it off'n him. He was tellin' about curin' a horse one time by jobbin' a knife into him, an' another time he killed a cat with chloro-

form. An' he claims he's had some experience with humans, too. Ye're damn lucky, Camillo, to have some one like him around. An' this young woman's a nurse, too, an' a damn good one, by the way she bawled Sandy McDonald out in the restaurant when he asked her where she was goin'. Between the two of 'em you'd ort to git along fine."

"If he's as handy with his doctorin' as what he is with a canoe, it ort to go all right," agreed the sick man.

"Ye're damn whistlin'! He's a good man, Jase is. Let him git started, onct, an' I'll bet he'll swing a mean knife!"

"Quit your gassin', you old fool!" cut in the nurse angrily, "an' help scrub up this table. That oilcloth has got to be scrubbed with boilin' water, too!"

"All right, sister! All right!" replied Old Bettles. "I was jest tryin' to hearten Camillo up. Him an' I've be'n friends fer a long time an,' I kind of hate to see him go, without no word of encouragement. Don't you think, mom, that a little shot of licker would be good fer him?"

"Well—the way his pulse is, it might be all right," agreed the girl. "But, the less talkin' you do, the better."

As she turned to further instruct Swiftwater Bill and Moosehide in arranging the table, and to place the pliers, needles, cheesecloth, and thread in the pail of boiling water, Old Bettles drew the cork from a bottle, poured a huge tin cup two-thirds full of whisky, and carried it to the bed.

"Hold yer head up, Camillo!" he ordered. "How the hell do you expect me to throw this into you? With a funnel?"

"Wait a minute"! cried the nurse, taking the cup from his hand and peering into it. "Damn near a cupful of straight whisky!" she cried. "What are you tryin' to do? Kill him!"

"The man's sick," answered Old Bettles. bristling. "He needs a good stiff jolt."

"Why any of you are alive is more'n I know!" snapped the nurse, as she measured two teaspoonsful of the liquor into another cup, diluted it with an equal amount of hot water, slipped her arm beneath the patient's head, and held up the cup to his lips.

"Huh," snorted Bettles, watching the performance in disgust, "you might be a good nurse, all right, but you'd make a hell of a bartender! You ain't give him licker enough to grease his goozle!"

The door opened to admit Burr MacShane and Jase Quill, who entered amid a swirl of snow powder.

"What number's his appendix?" demanded Jase, as he unwound the heavy woolen muffler from about his face.

"What do you mean—number?" returned the nurse. "An' quit flippin' that snow all over the place!"

"Well, there's Appendix Number One, Two, an' Three in the back of the book. But I don't see how they're goin' to help us none. Fer's we could make out, back in my shack, Number One's about horses an' cattle, Number Two's about shearin' sheep, an' Number Three's all them housewife's receipts, like makin' doughnuts an' cake."

"Pitch that damn book outdoors," cried the exasperated nurse, "an' get to work! If you say 'book' to me again I'll lam you one over the head with it! Sharpen up your knife!"

"I whet her good, up to the shack, an' I fetched my razor, too. The razor'll prob'ly be better'n the knife."

"Pour some water in the wash dish, then, an' scrub up your hands."

"They're clean. I worshed up before I et."

"Listen! You never gave your hands a proper scrubbin' in your life!" Reaching into her bag, she drew out a stiff brush which she tossed to him. "You cut your finger nails, lay your knife an' razor in a pan an' cover 'em with whisky an' then you get busy an' scrub your hands with that brush an' plenty of

soap an' water for the next twenty minutes by the clock! An' don't you dare to touch that poison towel to wipe 'em on, either! Let 'em dry, an' then we'll slosh some whisky over 'em."

She turned to the others:

"You men get to work an' spread that oilcloth on the table an' get the patient's clothes off an' throw a blanket over him. An' one of you find a couple of forks an' bend the tines forward at right angles, about half-way down 'em, an' then throw 'em in the boilin' water with that other stuff. We've got to have somethin' to hold the incision open with. I'll scrub up, too, an' give that oilcloth another scrubbin' an' slosh whisky over it, an' then you can lift the patient onto it. Pull the corks out of all those bottles. We're goin' to need that whisky—it's the nearest thing we've got to an antiseptic."

"It's a hell of a use to put good licker to," mourned Old Bettles as he pulled the corks. "Couldn't I have jest one little swig, mom? I could swaller what was left in the tin cup after you took Camillo's dost out of it. I feel the need of a drink, an' that would leave you the cup free, in case you needed it fer somethin'."

"Go ahead," said the girl, sloshing the oilcloth spread over the table liberally with whisky. "An' then help lift the patient onto the table. After that, three of you have got to clear out of here. It's so crowded you can't turn around without knockin' into some one. One of you will have to stay an' help lift him back onto the bunk, an' stand by to help in case anything happens."

ALL clamored to return to the saloon until Old Bettles settled the matter by reaching to the clock shelf and picking up a deck of cards.

"Low man stays," he announced, extending the deck on his open palm. "Cut!"

Moosehide Charlie cut the low card, and the others began to adjust earflaps and parka hoods. Solemnly each stepped to the table upon which the sick man lay, his head resting on a pillow.

"So long, Camillo! It's too bad it had to be you. But, we can't none of us expect to last fer ever except Bettles—an' he's lived damn near that long already."

"Good-by, old-timer! It's too bad you couldn't of lasted till spring. We'll be knowin', by then, what lays down agin bed-rock."

And the last was Old Bettles, who croaked in a voice husky with emotion and whisky:

"So-long, sourdough. We've—we've—played a hell of a lot of stud."

"So long, boys," replied Camillo Bill, his lips drawn with pain. "My will—I wrote it out last night when I figgered I was goin' to die. It's up there on the shelft. I want you boys should divide up my stuff amongst you. It had ort to be signed by a couple of witnesses before it goes to the public administrator."

"Don't you worry," replied Bettles. "We'll all sign it before he gits holt to it. An' in case this turns out different than we expect, an' you'd happen to git well, yer stuff'll be waitin' fer you."

"Get to hell out of her!" cried the exasperated nurse, turning from her task of scalding out a dishpan into which she tossed the cheesecloth after wringing it out, together with the crude instruments. "This man will be in better shape than any of you in a week or ten days!"

"Shore he will!" seconded Jase Quill. "Cripes! If the odds is like she claims, we ain't got nothin' to worry about, at all!"

"It looks like Camillo would be the one to do the worryin'," opined Swiftwater Bill.

"Camillo—hell!" cried Jase, still diligently scrubbing his hands, "he ain't got nothin' to worry about! If anything

goes wrong it'll be my mistake—not his!"

Old Bettles turned to Burr MacShane as they passed out the door.

"Well," he said, "it looks like whatever livin' Camillo does from now on will be just clear velvet."

"Where's your chloroform?" asked the girl, finishing a crude mask she had fastened out of the cheesecloth.

Quill indicated his bag, and she picked out the bottle and removed the cork.

"That's enough scrubbin'," she said. "Shake the suds off your hands an' rinse 'em with whisky, an' then come here an' pay attention to what I say!"

The man obeyed, and then stepped to her side. "The appendix," she explained, sponging the patient's abdomen with whisky, "lies midway between the end of his hip-bone and his umbilicus—"

"His which?"

"His umbilicus—his navel—right in the middle, there!"

"Oh!"

"McBurney's point, they call it—where the appendix lies."

"Whose?"

"What difference does it make?" cried the nurse, impatiently.

"Well, I wouldn't like to make no mistake."

"Well, shut up an' listen, then! I'll give him the anesthetic, an' when I tell you, you be ready to operate."

Wetting the mask with chloroform, she held it over the patient's face, telling him to inhale deeply. When she turned a few moments later, it was to see Quill, bending over a folding pocket rule, that he had laid upon the man's abdomen between the two indicated points.

"Where'd you get that thing?" she cried. "An' what are you doin' with it?"

"I always carry one in my pocket. It comes handy, like now. Eight an' a half inches. Half-ways would be four an' a quarter inches due west of his belly-button, the way he lays."

"Drop that damn thing, an' scrub your hands again!" cried the nurse, sponging at the spot the rule had touched with one hand, as she held the mask with the other. "An' don't you touch a thing that hasn't been boiled! Don't you know that everything around here is reekin' with germs!"

"Oh—germs! Yeah, I've read about them damn things. But, listen, sister—what I claim, if a thing's so little you can't even see it, it ain't nothin' to worry about. How big is this here appendix we're goin' after?"

"About the size of my little finger, generally. They ain't all just the same."

"That's more like it. To hell with them germs! How deep down is this thing—an' what is it—some kind of a gut, er somethin'?"

"He's under," said the nurse, lifting the razor from the pan and handing it to Jase. "Take this, now, an' make an incision."

"A which?"

"A cut! Make it about four or five inches long just where I told you."

"Up an' down? Er crossways?"

"It should be kind of slantin'—at a right angle to the way you laid the rule. An' listen! First you cut through the skin, an' then whatever fat there is, an' then through the muscles, an' then you'll come to the peritoneum."

"The what?"

"It's a thin, tough skin, or membrane, that lines the abdomen, an' you've got to be awful careful. Take it slow. If you should make a mistake an' cut too deep, you'd puncture an intestine, an' the patient would die. Go ahead, I've got to watch his pulse."

As Quill, razor in hand, leaned forward over the table, Moosehide Charlie caught his arm: "Hold on!" he cried, his eyes wide with horror. "This here's murder! You ain't no doctor! An' I'll be damned if I'll stand by an' see Camillo carved up right before my eyes! Let him die in his bunk like a white man!"

SWITCHING the razor to his left hand, Jase Quill whirled and struck. It was a mighty swing, straight from the shoulder of a powerful man, and it landed squarely on the point of Moosehide's jaw. Moosehide collapsed in a crumpled heap on the floor against the wall.

"Lay down that razor!" cried the girl, "an' scrub that hand you hit him with! Do you suppose he'll wake up an' raise hell?"

"Not while we're doin' this job, he won't," opined Jase, eyeing the unconscious man. "I ketched him jest right. He'll be listenin' to the birdies fer the next half-hour. Yer hell fer hand-scrubbin', ain't you, sister?"

"Hurry up, now, an' we'll get through before he wakes up! That's scrubbin' enough. Dry your hand on that boiled cloth an' get to work. I don't want to keep the patient under any longer than we can help."

She turned again to the man's pulse, and Jase Quill set to work.

"There's considerable blood," he announced. "What we goin' to do about that. I can't see what I'm doin' good."

Making hasty pads out of the cheesecloth, the girl sopped the blood from the wound. "There won't be a great deal of it," she said. "Here's more pads. Just sop it up like I did."

Once again she turned away, and Jase continued, cutting with sure, steady strokes of the razor. Presently he called out:

"Ive come to his guts, mom. Which one is it?"

In an instant the nurse was at his side.

"That's the ileum—that tube there, an' that's the cecum—that whitish wrinkled thing below it. The appendix is attached to the cecum. Reach in with your fingers and get hold of it, an' I'll tie it off with this thread. Here! I'll hold the wound open for you."

Deftly she manipulated the two bent forks, holding apart the edges of the wound.

"Careful, now. That's right! You've got it! Thank God it ain't busted! Hold it over that way, so I can get the thread around it. There! It's tied off, blood vessels, membrane an' all. Now cut it off so the thread will be left on the stump. An' be careful not to let any pus get into the wound!"

With steady fingers Jase obeyed orders.

"That's fine!" cried the girl a moment later, as she held a small wad of cloth against the stump and pinched it gently.

Throwing the wad to the floor, she wet a fresh wad with whisky and cleansed the stump thoroughly.

"Not a drop of pus got away!" she breathed with immense relief. "You couldn't have done it better if you'd tried a thousand times!"

"Oh, hell, mom," deprecated Jase modestly. "Operatin' on them little guts ain't so bad. If we'd had a lot of bones to go through it woulda be'n somethin'."

"Hand me those pliers, now, an' that threaded needle, an I'll try to sew up this peritoneum, while you hold the wound open."

The task was accomplished, the girl stitching peritoneum and muscles while Jase effectively manipulated the two forks. Afterward, she stitched the skin.

"I wish we had some kind of dressing," she said, "to put on this wound."

"I've got iodyform, in my satchel, there. An' three, four kinds of liniment. That Three X liniment there'll kill anythin' from a germ up. It'll take the hair off'n a horse."

"The iodoform will do," said the nurse, groping in the bag. "I'll have him bandaged in a few minutes, an' then you can wake up your friend an' get him to help you lift the patient back into his bunk."

Quill glanced at the recumbent figure on the floor.

"Shore, Moosehide'll help when I fetch

him to. He's good-hearted, Moosehide is—even if he don't know nothin' about surgery. An', by the way, mom, it's a good thing to remember in case you'd have to use it sometime! A tap on the chin is jest as good as chloroform fer puttin' folks to sleep, an' a damn sight quicker an' cheaper."

Vigorous rubbing about the face and wrists with a handful of snow revived the unconscious man, who sat up and felt gingerly of his jaw.

"What happened?" he asked, gazing about him in bewilderment.

"Nothin'," explained Jase, "except that you leaned a little too close to that chloroform, an' it got you. Powerful stuff, chloroform is. It ain't nothin' to monkey with if you ain't use' to it."

Together, the three lifted the unconscious patient into his bunk.

"Is he dead?" asked Moosehide.

"Hell, no!" exclaimed Jase. "He's guaranteed to live a damn sight longer'n you will! We fetched you to first so we could use you. Wait till I git me another handful of snow, an' I'll go to work on him."

"You leave the patient to me!" ordered the nurse tersely. "Move that table back where it belongs, an' bring in some water, an' plenty of wood, an' then clear out of here, both of you!"

When the men had complied, she turned to Jase.

"You come back in the mornin'," she said, "so I can climb in that extra bunk an' catch me some sleep. This man will require some careful nursin' for the next few days, an' at least you know enough to obey orders. But I'll be right here, so you can wake me in case you have to."

"Yes, mom, I'll be here," promised Jase.

"Yer shore he ain't dead?" persisted Moosehide, eyeing the motionless figure.

"Does that sound like it?" asked the nurse with a grin, as a retching, hic-coughing sound came from the bunk.

Moosehide passed a hand across his forehead.

"He'll be wishin' he was in a few minutes. That there chloryform shore is powerful stuff. My head aches fit to split."

"Oh, don't pay no 'tention to that," advised Jase gravely. "It'll pass off, what with the cold air, an' a few drinks. Come on, we'll be goin' back to the saloon. The boys'll want to be gittin' on with their stud."

JIM JEFFRIES and DUMB JULIUS

An Off-the-Trail Novelette

by Eddy Orcutt

CHAPTER I

OLD FITZ

THERE was a moment when Dumb Julius could have touched the Big Fellow's hand, but he didn't do it. It wouldn't have been right.

"A'right," the cop said, "get back!"

Dumb Julius got back.

The policeman's nightstick and arm formed a barrier, and Julius kept behind it, staring over it. The cop stared, too, and the little crowd at the dressing-room door shoved in and swayed back again, gabbling and laughing, waiting to cheer the new champion. Julius waited, too—but when the cheer came, he couldn't join it. He could only keep on staring.

Dumb Julius felt something in his thin chest that was neither chill nor hot, and a lump swelled up in his throat.

The dressing-room door opened.

Above it a single incandescent bulb glowed yellow against a tin reflector, and Jim Jeffries came out slowly into the thin spotlight—James J. Jeffries,

new heavyweight champion of the world.

The crowd cheered. The champion's friends jammed the doorway—Brady, Tommy Ryan, Billy Delaney, Jack Jeffries and the rest. They laughed. They whooped at the little crowd in the alley, pushed the big fellow forward.

Dumb Julius looked at him, staring.

Julius was thin, pinch-faced and sallow. He stared with wide, starved gray eyes at a man whose bulk all but filled the doorway—at a man huge and heavy-limbed and saturnine, who tilted his derby to shadow the puffed eye and the bruised lips that crafty old Bob Fitzsimmons had battered in the ring that night. He stared at a powerful and unbeatable man, flushed with a hard victory and grinning a little bashfully while the crowd cheered him. And in the champion's grin, Dumb Julius found still an edge of the grin, ironic amusement the Big Fellow had shown in the ring. Jeff had laughed in the ring. He had laughed through a smear of his own blood while he crowded in steadily against the lashing of Old Fitz's deadly fists.

"Stand back, everybody!"

But the crowd eddied in around the champion's party, and Julius let himself be milled up close to the barrier. He could see the Big Fellow close to. He was very near the Big Fellow, at one moment—could have reached out and touched his bruised hand. The champion's party pushed through and the crowd closed in, so that all Julius could see was the welter of heads and shoulders and the silhouette of the waiting carriage against the lights of Coney. Then the carriage moved, the crowd whooped, and Jim Jeffries was gone.

Dumb Julius was alone, pushed and elbowed as the crowd thinned out along Surf Avenue, but he was not lonely. He was full of the feel of what he had seen. He was warm, near tears, and his throat ached.

The crowd smothered him in the riotous jam on the trolley, but it did not matter. The long ride to South Brooklyn did not matter. The mob on the ferry, the sweltering walk up Whitehall Street—none of these mattered, and the utter weariness in his thin body did not matter. The starveling youth had seen his glimpse of greatness, and he was filled with its glow. Lesser things did not touch him.

In the ring that night he had seen something more than the spectacle of two prizefighters battling over a roped square of white canvas. He had no knowledge of the ring. He had gone to Coney on a ticket won in a raffle at Stillwell's pool room, where he delivered clothes for a cheap cleaner. But Jim Jeffries, crouching and relentless and laughing grimly at his own hurts, had given the thin-faced lad a direct and sudden sense of something unconquerable—the experience of a thing glamorous and magnificent. He had seen a fighter who could not be beaten—had watched him push doggedly into the cruel slashing of the ring's deadliest puncher. In the end, when Jim Jeffries' fated battering had run its course, Julius had seen the Big Fellow unleash his own sudden power. He had seen Bob Fitzsimmons stretched on the wet canvas, destroyed by a fury that neither wiles nor gallantry could conquer.

IT WAS past one o'clock when Dumb Julius threaded the east-of-Broadway backwash of the city, on the encroaching borders of Little Italy, and reached the drab shop on Bowen Street where he lived. The June night was stifling, and he still had work to do, but he walked rapidly. He crossed Bowen to the saloon called Herman's, entered, went to the far end of the bar and waited there for a time. Both barkeeps were busy.

Singer Burke lounged over, finally, with a grin for the awkward, patient kid.

"Come for the clothes?" Burke asked.

"Yes, please, Mr. Burke."

Singer was hardly taller than Julius, but broad-built and powerful. He wore a derby tilted back, and a plastered lock of hair straggled down onto his forehead. His face was curious. It was a strange exaggeration of evil and brute ugliness—but it was an exaggeration without quite being a caricature. Singer Burke was captain of the Bowen Street gang of toughs, and his word was the district's law and order. In Herman's he was part bouncer and part boss.

"Hey, Fritz!" the Singer called out, "gimme the key!" The left side of his mouth was twisted, indented—partly because that side of his face had been battered in street fighting.

One of the bartenders took a key off the back-bar and slid it along the mahogany so that it stopped exactly in front of Singer Burke. Burke picked it up, and Julius followed him to a back door into the adjoining barber shop. Burke watched idly while Julius gathered up the half dozen suits left there for cleaning or pressing.

"This is a hell of a time of night, kid," Singer said. "Out sporting, hey?"

Julius was impressed by the attention from Singer Burke, yet at the same time felt some right to it. He said: "I went to the big fight."

"What did you think of it?" Burke locked the door, and Julius halted at the question—stood clasping his bundle of clothes in front of him, looking intently at Singer. He wanted to say something, but his mind raced through the question and found an answer that he knew he could not put into words. He could not tell Singer Burke what he had seen.

Burke laughed.

"All right, Dummy," he said.

Julius went away, still silent. That was why they called him Dumb Julius—his mind worked swiftly to a question's answer, but often it warned him, also, against trying to put the answer into words. Then he was dumb.

HE WENT out of the saloon silently, carried his dangling bundle over to the shop. A sign on the glass front said: "Weitekamp Tailor—Cleaning & Dyeing," and the door to the shop was in an alcove beside the window. Julius let himself in, groped his way back and switched on a light bulb dangling from a cord.

The shop was deep and narrow, with a railed wooden platform making a sort of mezzanine floor over the rear of it. In the front were Mr. Weitekamp's cutting tables, his tailor's bench, long mirrors, a dressing cabinet and a set of shelves filled with suit fabrics. Screens shut off the space under the mezzanine, and the cleaning and dyeing vats were kept there. Julius carried his clothes up the wooden stair to the balcony, and switched on another bulb. He laid the clothes on a bench, then lit the two-burner gas plate under the pressing-irons.

The cleaning jobs would wait, but the pressing jobs had to be ready for delivery the first thing in the morning.

The shop was airless, hot, heavy with the dry odor of cloth and the reek of cleaning fluid. Across the mezzanine a rack of clothes—suits newly pressed, uncalled-for coats and suits, or dye jobs hung up to air—made a screen for a space in the rear. While the irons were heating, Julius pushed through the rack of clothes and entered the space behind it. This was his home. He had a cot there with a tumble of blankets on it, a small packing case, and a big fragment of plate-glass mirror tilted on the ledge of the wainscoting. It was very private, stale-smelling and stifling hot.

Dumb Julius trembled suddenly, giving way to a strange eagerness. With swift, uncertain fingers, he stripped off coat and vest and shirt. He unbuttoned

the upper half of his undersuit, bared himself to the waist and tied the sleeves together at the midriff, like a belt. He tilted the fragment of mirror so that he could see himself in it. He crouched a little, putting out his left fist. He could see his face, neck, part of the left arm and shoulder. He tucked his chin behind that shoulder, bent his right elbow across his belly. He crouched lower, tensing his own stringy muscles and trying to give them the shape of Jeff's—

Julius Brown was twenty years old on the night when Jim Jeffries beat old Fitz. He stood five feet ten and weighed less than a hundred and twenty pounds. He had never known the feeling of being well-fed, and had never given the matter any thought. He was four years out of the St. Vincent's Home in Brooklyn, did not know who his parents were, and earned six dollars a week. He returned two dollars a week to his boss —he was buying an interest in the business—and lived on four. He did not know that he was thin, that he was homely, that he was awkward, and he was completely accustomed to the hurt of being laughed at. His nickname everywhere was "Dummy."

That night, though, he dared to pose in the Jeffries crouch and shuffle forward, watching himself in the mirror. He dared to feel sure of himself, like a man who could take great hurts, laugh at them, and go on to win. Daring to imagine, he took old Fitz's right-hand smash to the mouth, grinned, wiped the blood away and went in again. He shoved out a powerful left hand, throwing a six-inch jab that was like a battering ram. He cocked a right hand that could crush and stun—

When he went to the bench, the irons were too hot. While they cooled, he sorted out the pressing jobs and gave them a light sponging. One of the suits was Singer Burke's, and although the tag did not say "Cl," Julius took it downstairs and spotted out the soiled places before he pressed it. He felt grateful to Singer. He had not been able to answer Burke's question about the fight, but he felt grateful to him for asking it.

He worked steadily for perhaps an hour. He lowered his head stubbornly, his arms whipcorded by the heavy irons, and pretended that the drench of sweat was the blood-salted sweat of a man fighting in the ring. Part of the time he leaned against the pressing bench while he worked, because he was very tired.

CHAPTER II

MONEY

ON THE afternoon of November 3, 1899, Dumb Julius paid five dollars for a ticket on Jeffries to beat Sailor Tom Sharkey at Coney Island that night. A man named Sully Reid made a book at Herman's, and Julius bought his ticket there—his first wager, and his first use of money for anything but the barest of necessities.

By that time—five months after he had first seen James J. Jeffries under the cruel glamour of the ring's floodlights —Julius had the money to spend. In a curious, indirect way, Jeff himself was the cause of it.

It was because of Jeff that he had gone late to Herman's after the Fitzsimmons fight, encountering Singer Burke there. And it was because of that encounter that, when a chance came, Julius did Burke a favor in a pinch.

In July a gang war flared up, and a crowd of tough Italian boys offered Singer Burke a fight for control of the district. Weitekamp's was one of a hundred establishments that paid Singer's crowd two or three dollars a week as protection against "breakage," and to Julius this tribute seemed a normal thing. He resented the Italians' rumored threat to break in on it. More deeply, though, he resented any attack on the

man who had been kind to him on that great night of his. He was all for Singer Burke.

Vicious midnight brawls broke out in the Bowen Street neighborhood, and Julius noted strangers among Burke's men at Herman's Bar—imported hoodlums, hired from other districts. Making his rounds for Weitekamp, Julius heard talk of "wops" and "dagoes," and rumors of a big fight impending. By midnight, Bowen Street was deserted every night. Burke's men patroled the area in small groups, lurking under cover and awaiting an attack.

Then, late in the month, the raid came and Singer Burke killed a man in it. Chance made Dumb Julius his ally.

Julius was aroused at around three o'clock of the morning—across the street at Herman's, glass was crashing and there was an outburst of shrill yells. Julius piled out of his cot, hurried downstairs and stared through the front window. He saw part of the fight. He saw the invading hoodlums fire their last volley of rocks at the saloon, saw one brief mêlée, when a couple of Burke's watchers charged out of the alley beside Herman's, clubbed at the Italians and were beaten off. Then the invaders turned and pelted across the street toward the alley by which they had entered Bowen Street—the alley on Weitekamp's side of the street.

Julius heard a shot from that alley. He did not know then what the sound was. Later he learned that Burke had stationed himself there at the first noise of the raid, drawing his pistol to cut off the Italians' retreat.

A man ran past Julius' window suddenly, turned, flashed a knife—and then Singer Burke ran at him. The gun in Burke's hand blazed. The man staggered, swerved into the alcove beside Weitekamp's door, and Burke shot again and again. And then, standing above his victim, Singer paused uncertainly.

Julius hammered on the door—opened it.

"Mr. Burke! Mr. Burke! In here!"

Singer acted. He bent and snatched up the dead man's knife. He said: "Look, Dummy—he hammered on the door and you opened it!" He talked fast, hoarsely.

Singer grabbed Julius' left arm, clenched it and jabbed the stiletto into it, well away from the wrist. He did it swiftly, ripping a little. It felt like a blunt blow until the pain came. Julius gasped and staggered back, but he made no outcry.

"He stabbed you! You yelled!" Singer Burke dropped the knife. "Then I come running across from Herman's!"

Already a police whistle piped from the direction of Third Avenue. Windows were shoved up along the street. Burke had not dared escape by the alley, lest the Italians' rearguard ambush him there; but a break toward either end of Bowen Street would have run him into a police beat. Julius, bleeding from the light wound, was a godsend to Singer—a wounded witness to justifiable homicide.

Even in the shock of the sudden pain, Dumb Julius realized the rôle Burke had given him—knew that Burke depended on him. He leaned back against the door jamb.

Burke said fiercely: "Talk, Dummy! Do you understand?"

"Yes," Julius told him.

Then the cops came.

The rest was very simple. A week later Burke was arraigned in magistrate's court, with Julius Brown and a sympathetic Irish policeman as the only witnesses. A shrewd, sleepy-looking lawyer named Breed presented Burke's case—in view of Julius Brown's evidence against the dead hoodlum, his killer was not bound over for trial. It was open and shut.

The moral aspects of the matter did not bother Julius, because he was quite

unaware that there were any, but when Singer offered him ten dollars as a present, he thought ahead quickly and refused. Jeff and Tom Sharkey had been signed ten days after the Big Fellow won the title, and Julius knew that he would need money to see that fight. But he also knew definitely that he did not want to hire out in Singer Burke's line of business.

"Have it your own way," Burke said. Julius, picking up the clothes at Herman's, knew that Singer could be useful to him some time, but his "Thank-you" was grave and non-committal.

There was beginning to be a kind of assurance behind the lad's dumb quiet, and it may be that Singer Burke sensed it. From that time, at any rate, Julius rated as Burke's friend. Burke entrusted him with small errands, and once or twice bought him a glass of beer at Herman's.

TOWARD the end of that hot summer, Julius went to Mr. Weitekamp for his Jeff-Sharkey fight money. The cheapest ticket to the Coney Island Sporting Club would be five dollars, and Julius had decided that he could not be sure of saving five dollars out of his earnings by the end of October. He asked Mr. Weitekamp, after work one night, for the refund of five dollars from his two-dollar-a-week investment in the business. Julius had kept the account on neatly-squared sheets of wrapping paper, and it figured to nearly four hundred dollars. Mr. Weitekamp refused. Money was tight, and it was no time to spend five dollars on foolishness.

"For five weeks, then," Julius asked, "could I pay only one dollar a week instead of two?"

Mr. Weitekamp was heavy, short-legged, with a big head and impressive jowls. He said: "Look, an agreement is an agreement, Julius. I'd hate to see you break this agreement, because you got money in it—you might lose your money if the agreement got broken."

Because Julius did not answer that, Mr. Weitekamp thought the lad was licked. He tutted the boy stodgily, finished putting on his coat and vest, and went home.

But Julius had already thought past the five dollars, and had already seen what Mr. Weitekamp was doing with the four hundred. He did not say anything, because he realized at once that there was no use in talking. He had made that agreement as a raw, ignorant kid, hunting any kind of a job. He had accepted it completely and gone on with it for four years—never thinking it through, any more than he had tried to think through the riddles of life, death and eternity. And he had accepted Mr. Weitekamp as boss in the same way that he might have accepted a father and mother unthinkingly. But when the arrangement suddenly failed to meet his new need, Julius had to think it through. He did his thinking quickly, completely—and without talking about it.

That night he told his story to Mr. Burke, and early the next afternoon Singer called on Mr. Weitekamp. Singer's technique was excellent.

Mr. Burke locked the door behind him as he came in. He called Julius down from his pressing-bench on the balcony. When he sat himself down in front of Mr. Weitekamp at the cutting-table, the tailor broke into a visible sweat. Mr. Burke grinned with his twisted mouth, but his eyes were hard, bright, appraising, like a snake's. He "softened" Mr. Weitekamp by describing in detail some of the accidents that had happened to people who injured friends of Singer Burke's—

"I don't know how they happen," Singer said, "but they do happen. Maybe you didn't know," he added, "that Julius here, was a good friend of mine?"

Mr. Weitekamp shook and stammered, but Mr. Burke seemed hardly to notice it. He looked at a slip of paper in his hand, and said: "Now it seems Julius, here, has been robbed of three hundred and eighty-six dollars, Mr. Weitekamp. He knows who has it, and he wants it back, and I want him to get it back. If—"

"He ain't robbed," the tailor said, frightened into talking. The size of the amount scared him. "I'm letting him buy into the business. I'm—"

Burke laughed. "You're funning, Mr. Weitekamp. Now by seven o'clock tonight—"

Julius felt sorry for Mr. Weitekamp, at last, but he did not interrupt. He let Mr. Burke handle the matter in his own way. Weitekamp broke down and bawled, before Singer was through with him—and Singer Burke deliberately, methodically, listed Mr. Weitekamp's promises on his slip of paper and made the tailor agree to each. Julius was to have a refund of thirty-six dollars in half interest in the shop. He was to have a refund of thirty-six dollars in cash. He was to have a wage of ten dollars a week. He was to have access to the shop's book, and a weekly share of one-half the shop's profits above wages and expenses.

"And now, Dummy," Burke said to Julius, "the next thing is to go to the lawyer and have him give you some papers on this."

Julius waited for an explanation, watching Burke's face. Burke said: "The lawyer will make out papers for Mr. Weitekamp to sign. Then it'll be legal. You come on across the street and I'll give you Mr. Breed's address."

In Herman's, while Burke scribbled the lawyer's office number, Julius began to know dimly that a change had come into his way of living—and that he owed Singer Burke something more impressive than a thank-you. He knew what to do. The idea of doing it excited him suddenly.

"Here you are," Burke said.

Julius Brown asked: "Will you let me buy you a drink?"

Burke laughed outright, and Julius felt a hot flush along his cheek-bones. But Burke dug a big hand into his shoulder and shook him jovially.

"Why the hell wouldn't I?" he said. "Hey, Fritz! Money on the bar! The boy's buying!"

The barkeep grinned. "Is it all right?"

"Sure," Singer Burke said, "Julius here turned twenty-one this afternoon!" Dumb Julius felt suddenly that Burke was telling the truth. He put his foot on the rail. Singer ordered a straight rye, but when Julius asked for the same, Burke laughed at him again.

"Take your time, kiddo," Singer said. "Yours'll be a straight beer!"

CHAPTER III

TOUGH TOM SHARKEY

A GALE swept Coney on the night of the Sharkey fight.

Dumb Julius climbed to his perch in the gallery with the first rush of bedraggled, wind-whipped spectators, splashed from the lanes of mud at the narrow entrances. The crowd pounded in and the arena rocked with the trample of feet, but at intervals the wind's noise was higher. When the noise of the crowd grew accustomed, Julius could hear the drumming of rain gusts on the raftered roof.

Julius was cold—he was thoroughly wet, and his shoes were mud-soaked—but it was not the cold that made him shiver. He was afraid.

He had spent his own money to see this fight, and he had wagered his own money to back the champion. About those things, he had the same feel of complete rightness that he had known

when he saw Jim Jeffries beat Fitzsimmons. His fear went deeper. For Dumb Julius, all the security and glamour that his new god had given him were at stake that night in the ring. Security was new to him. Glamour was new. These possessions of his were tender and secret and a little absurd, like a raw kid's first love for a girl. Jim Jeffries had them in his keeping. He was to take them into the ring that night, while Julius watched, and hazard them against the rocky fists of Sailor Tom Sharkey.

The noisy crowd, trooping in out of the bad weather, made the chill of waiting all the more lonely for Dumb Julius. The crowd was untroubled, unaware of any dread in the darkened ring. Holders of the cheaper tickets went scrambling up into the forty-foot tier of bleacher seats, yelling at each other and laughing, looking for good places. On the floor, the sports went more leisurely to their posts, chaffing the worried ushers, joking with each other, shaking the rain off ulsters and derbies. Julius watched it all dumbly, intently, feeling desperately remote from it all.

Big Jeff had spent the late summer in England; Julius had read in the papers that he had been sick there, that he had dissipated, that he was in no shape to fight. Rumors had come down from Asbury Park that Jeffries had loafed through his training. There was a story that Tommy Ryan had punched him all over the training ring, made him quit in a sulk. Canvassing hotels, pool-rooms, bars, rooming houses, in his daily rounds, Julius had heard this kind of talk. Waiting on the bleachers that night, he tried not to keep thinking about it—but he shivered, and the noise of the crowd seemed ugly and callous.

Sailor Tom Sharkey was tough and angry—full of talk about Jeff's "crooked" decision over him in San Francisco. Certain it was that Sailor Tom was not afraid of the champion. He was going to give Jeff a fight.

So Julius waited, crowded by the growing jam into the bleacher seats, trying to warm himself by hugging his arms tightly over his chest. The arena was filling up. The place grew heavy with the smell of wet clothing and tobacco smoke.

Dumb Julius had one comfort. He had bet his five dollars on the Big Fellow—if Jeff was going to lose, he would lose, too. He clung to that comfort whenever he could, hugging himself to keep from shivering.

At eight o'clock the battery of electric lights above the ring was switched on, and the crowd greeted the sight with yells and cheers. There were hundreds of lights, and the reflectors were better arranged than they had been for the Fitzsimmons fight. The ring was blinding white. There was still an hour before the big fight, but the club was putting on a ten-round prelim. In the main-floor aisles, the drift of the crowd grew more hurried.

The preliminary boys came on—one of them looked like a small edition of Jim Jeffries—and their battle gave Julius a little rest from the dread of waiting. The boys fought, and the crowd yelled. Julius watched the little Jeffries take a beating, and a man beside him on the bleacher plank yelled: "That's what Big Jeff's going to get!" Julius felt warmer, not so afraid, and yet—

The prelim ended—Tommy Moran of Brooklyn got the decision, and the little Jeffries left the ring with a towel around his head. Then a delay came. The crowd, already yelling for Jeff to come out and get his, began to grow ill-tempered, restless. There were outbursts of hooting, cat-calls, hammering on the bleacher planks. Time dragged. Officials clustered around the timekeeper at the ringside, and the crowd grew angrier.

Julius, tense again, clenched his hands suddenly into the sweat of his palms. There was a new outburst of yells, a

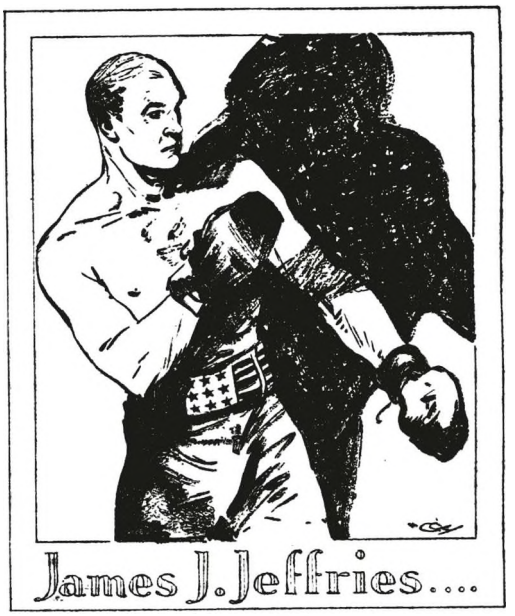
swift rising of the crowd around the dressing-room tunnel. A knot of men pushed out into the aisle, and the crowd cheered. A stocky fighting man, stripped down to his green trunks and wearing a towel over his shoulders, broke out of the knot of handlers and went jog-trotting down the aisle, mitting his bandaged hands above his head.

"Hey, Sharkey! Sharkey! Kill the big loafer, Tom!"

The crowd roared to him, and the stocky man grinned, liking it. His handlers hurried after him, swarming toward the ring. The mob's laughter roared out, cheering the tough sailor's hurry to get in and fight.

"Hey, Sharkey!"

Julius waited.



THEN the clamor of the crowd heightened suddenly again — and there were jeers in the uproar, this time, because the crowd blamed the champion for the delay. Jim Jeffries came down the aisle slowly, looking at the floor. His handlers yelled back at the crowd, but Jeff made no motion. He walked steadily down to the ring, climbed in and mitted his hands briefly at the mob's yell. He was wearing his red sweater and chewing gum. He walked around his corner, tested the ropes and sat down on his stool.

Julius watched. Sharkey went over to Jeff's corner, touched his hands and swung away. Jeff smiled shortly when Sharkey turned his back. Sharkey strutted, still grinning a little at the crowd, but his grin was hard, serious, intent. He was a barrel-chested man, abnormally broad and close-coupled. Jeff topped him by inches, outweighed him thirty pounds, but Sailor Tom had the look of compact fighting power about him. The crowd's noise filled the arena. Another wait, then Referee Siler called the men out.

Julius heard the clang of the bell, at long last, from a great distance—

Tom Sharkey came out of his corner cat-footed and almost running, and the champion stopped, crouched and jabbed his long left as the tough sailor began to swing.

Dumb Julius forgot the cold.

Julius forgot the cold, forgot the dread of waiting—stared down at the blazing ring, not hearing the wind's fury outside any more, nor the driving of the rain on the arena's gaunt roof.

He saw a battle of great fighting men.

Tom Sharkey, lion-hearted and bitter, blasted at the champion from every angle, from the first gong. Jim Jeffries looked sallow and staring under the scorching lights, but he settled grimly into his crouch and fought his own fight. The fury behind the Big Fellow's hammering left hand or the drive of his crouching right was no less bitter than the sailor's.

Jeff's right hand swept the sailor to the floor, tumbled him to the ropes, early in the second—and Julius Brown almost yelled. Sharkey leaped to his feet, stood scowling for a second with his hands

down. When Jeffries charged in with the roar of the mob at his back, Sharkey swung savagely with both hands, rocked the Big Fellow back and finished the round in a fury of punching. The tide of battle whipsawed back and forth. The men slugged in sharp rallies, circled each other warily when the going slowed, and every lull was breathless with a threat of the next attack.

Sharkey's hammering fists drove Jeff across the ring in the seventh, and the champion was unsteady when he went to his corner at the bell. But in the next it was Jeff who all but crashed the other man to the canvas—his right hand split the sailor's ear, smeared the side of his head with blood. The sailor wrestled sturdily against the Big Fellow's weight in the clinches, and there were jeers for the champ.

The fight went on. Jeff cut the smaller man's eye—and the sailor laughed and stuck out his tongue. Once for a whole round the sailor outslugged the champion at every turn, but in the clinches the champ winked and passed remarks to Tom O'Rourke, yelling crazily in Sharkey's corner. Jeff and the sailor grinned at each other when the bell came.

Sharkey took his cut eye, the split ear, the champion's terrific right-hand uppercuts that rocked his head back and drew blood from his mouth. He waded in. In the fifteenth round, he smashed Jeff squarely in the face, so that blood spurted from his nose—and then, as if maddened at the sight of it, clubbed the Big Fellow to the ropes in a savage fury that brought the crowd to its feet.

The men were tired, smeared, sweating desperately under the blinding heat of the arcs. They fought on. And up in the bleechers, Dumb Julius finally knew that his champion was finally beating his way to the fore. Before the twentieth round began, Sharkey was weakening—doing his fighting desperately, in exhausting spurts. Big Jeff was coming in pitilessly, bearing down in the clinches, roughing the stocky sailor and nailing him with racking uppercuts when he got in close. In the twenty-second, the bell saved Sharkey—he laughed, going to his corner, but the bell had saved him. Jeff hammered him savagely in the next round, and in the twenty-fourth Tom staggered again and again, only his raw courage keeping him off the canvas.

The storm of the last round swept even Dumb Julius to his feet, rocking in the mob on the bleacher planks; and when the bloodied sailor cried in his last fighting despair, Julius knew that there were strange tears on his own cheeks, too.

In the bedlam at the end, Sharkey stumbled, clawing at Jeff's arm and wrenching off the champion's glove. George Siler stepped in, trying to push them apart, and motioned that the fight was over. He pointed at Jeff's corner, and one of the handlers leaped up to the ring and threw an American flag over the champion's shoulders. But Sharkey still struck out, trying to get around the referee and go on with the fight. He had two ribs and his left hand broken, he was bleeding from ear and mouth and the cut over his eye—but the stubborn man in the green Irish tights wanted to go on with the fight. O'Rourke had to pull him away, at last—and Tom O'Rourke was crying, too.

Julius Brown strained at the ring, staring desperately across the arena's madhouse, watching Jim Jeffries' every move. Jeff took the flag off, giving it to Brady. He tilted his head back, smiling and squinting his eyes while they sponged the blood off his face. People were crowding around him, and the mob packed the aisles below his corner. Jeff stood unshaken, victor again, and the hot ring lights gleamed on his wet shoulders.

Julius looked, knowing that his own

private rightness was unshaken, still, and secure. His eyes were misted and his throat ached. He wanted to cheer—but he had never done it, did not know how, and did not dare try.

CHAPTER IV

A PUDDING FOR JEFF

MR. WEITEKAMP pointed to a couple of suits that he had mended and pressed. "These two go up to Mr. Corliss, at the Yale House, right away."

Julius had come in from his first deliveries, the morning after the Sharkey fight. He was gaunt with cold and bedraggled from the chill drizzle of November rain in the streets, but he spoke up to the tailor directly, as man to man.

"Mr. Weitekamp," he said, "I want to talk to you." Weitekamp looked at him in surprise.

"I think we better hire another man," Julius told him. "He could take care of nearly all the cleaning and pressing, and I could put in all my time outside—delivering and collecting and working up business. We could make a good deal more money."

Mr. Weitekamp was dumfounded. "Hire another man!"

Lying awake the night before, completely sure of his own rightness, and thinking out the details for a new way of living, Julius had gone over his plan thoroughly, carefully, building no air castles. He did not want to talk about it now—much less argue it. He wanted to go out and go to work at it.

"Look," he said quietly. "I can go back to six dollars a week—that'll save four to pay the new man. We've had pretty near ten a week profit ever since we've been partners—if we put that back, there's fourteen, right there. I can get a good man from Lubic's that'll work for fifteen. And if I spend all my time outside, I know I can get twice the business I get now."

But the tailor was completely disorganized.

"Why, you— You—"

He was astonished and shocked at the flow of talk from Dumb Julius, and he was really frightened at the notion of spending money to take money. He blew up in a tirade of language, saying much about "upstarts" and "wet-nosed kids." Julius waited, frowning a little.

When Mr. Weitekamp halted, floundering for new words, Julius looked at him directly, not smiling. He said: "Last night after the fight, I was talking it over with Mr. Burke—"

Weitekamp quit cold.

From that moment, Julius was boss at Weitekamp's—and from that moment he began to work out for himself his new way of living. He nursed his own private sense of Jim Jeffries' strength and sureness, unconquerable in the ring. In his own single-minded and wordless way, he set out to build for himself a strength and sureness to match that private legend. He wanted to be a man who might meet Jim Jeffries, take his hand, and know that it was right to do so. From that moment, he worked at it.

"You can 'it 'im, but y' cawn't 'urt 'im!"

Old Bob Fitzsimmons had said that about the Big Fellow, on the night Jeff had stripped him of the title. The same thing was true, curiously, of Julius Brown.

Cold and hunger and shabbiness could not stop Dumb Julius, because he accepted them as normal. Ridicule could not hurt him in the "swell" establishments where he called, because he was used to ridicule. He could not be frightened out of the rough places—he had grown up among toughs and hoodlums, and he feared them only in the sense that a skilled woodsman fears a puma

or a rattlesnake. And he could not be stopped by sheer fatigue, because he had experienced it for years.

Julius worked early and late, through that cold winter of the century's turn—and he got results.

No job was too small for him. No customer was too exacting. And, when it came to negotiating for regular business with hotel managers, boss barbers, proprietors of saloons or sporting places, Julius was not abashed by any amount of "front." His persistent, dumb sureness was often more effective than any amount of glib salesmanship, and it was always more amusing.

"All right, Mister Brown, you win!" If the customer enjoyed laughing at him, calling him "Mister," Julius did not mind. He got the business.

Julius put the new man, Rudolph, to work, and kept him busy. Rudolph was a thin, sharp-nosed fellow, a hard worker, and he paid dividends from the start. Weitekamp dropped into the rôle of tailor and shop foreman. Julius handled the books, figured costs and profits, managed the wage and material accounts, and settled the shop's three-man payroll every Saturday night. The shop was a paying proposition, and Julius began to make money for himself. By the spring of 1900, he had a personal bank account of nearly three hundred dollars.

He took, also, to trailing the fringes of the sporting crowd, followers of the ring—there was money to be made from snappy dressers and free spenders; and there, too, he heard talk from men who knew things about Jim Jeffries, or about Joe Choynski, Kid McCoy, Joe Walcott the Giant Killer, Fitzsimmons, and the lesser giants of the time. While he made money, then, he also learned the rôle he wanted to play in the spending of money.

He put some of this learning to use on the night Jim Jeffries fought big John Finnegan of Pittsburgh at the Cadillac Club in Detroit. Jeff was going to fight Jim Corbett at Coney Island in May—Julius was going to have a twenty-five dollar ringside seat for that fight—and the Detroit show, early in April, was a warm-up. Sam Brady had agreed to pay Finnegan a hundred dollars if Jeff did not knock him out inside four rounds.

JULIUS went over to Herman's early that evening, with some fifteen dollars in cash to deposit in the safe. He cached his money there every week, taking a memo from Fritz as a receipt. When he had a sum of fifty dollars or more, he would take the money over to the Broadway Exchange to deposit in his account—and since it took him several weeks to build up fifty dollars in savings, he generally had a credit in the safe at Herman's.

Fritz took his money, that night, scribbled a receipt and handed it across the bar. Four or five men were standing near by, talking about Jeff. One of them said: "But he's young, Nate. Sure, he's putting on weight—but I bet it's good, solid muscle."

"Jeff's hog-fat and out of condition." Nate was well-dressed, middle-aged, the type that Julius recognized as a sportsman, not a hanger-on. "Finnegan's big, strong as an ox," Nate insisted. "He'll stay four rounds without any trouble."

The bartender, grinning over the mahogany, jerked a thumb at Julius. He said to Nate: "You can't tell that to this lad here. He's looney about Jim Jeffries."

The men turned. Nate's glance was insolent only in an impersonal, inquiring way. He intended no affront to the thin youngster in the neatly shabby clothes. He merely looked him over. And Julius, used to that scrutiny, met the glance without embarrassment.

Nate chuckled, condescending. "How are you betting, my lad?"

Julius said: "I'm betting Jeff knocks him out!"

"How much?"

Nate asked it jovially, winking at his friends. They joined in the chuckle. Making a wager with the hobbledehoy at the bar was a good joke—still a better joke because the hobbledehoy took it seriously.

Julius remembered the sum Jeff's manager was offering Finnegan in Detroit that night. He turned to Fritz Mayer, the barkeep.

"With what I've got in the safe now," he asked, "would I be good for a hundred dollars?"

Fritz erased his grin. "Don't be foolish with your money, Julius."

Nate reddened with a tinge of anger—he suspected the kid of trying to turn the joke against him. Because he could neither bluff nor call against a mere lad, he felt that the lad was being fresh.

But Fritz nodded at the men.

"It's his money," he said. "He's good for a hundred."

Fritz handed Nate one of Weitekamp's cards. He said: "I'm in this business—I'm good for the money. I'd like to bet a knockout, if you want to bet." He said it directly, respectfully.

Nate narrowed his eyes thoughtfully. He did not want to rob a boy, but he did not want to let a boy bluff him. Something in the way Dumb Julius looked at him convinced him that he could bet. He took out his wallet, thumbed out some twenties—

"My name is Gardner," he said. "Nate Gardner of Philadelphia." He shook hands with Julius. "Even money John Finnegan lasts four rounds." Fritz picked up the money and gave Julius and Mr. Gardner penciled receipts.

Julius played out his part—he knew that it would not do for him to linger in Herman's, waiting for a news bulletin.

He said: "If you'll excuse me, Mr. Gardner, I have a call to make. I'll be back about ten."

Julius Brown . . .

The hundred-dollar bet had attracted a little crowd to the bar, and Julius sensed the feel of the crowd as he shouldered his way out. There was amusement among those older men, but a kind of respect, too. They saw that Dumb Julius was willing to "lay it on the line." Julius felt the glow of that new experience while he walked the streets, waiting for ten o'clock.

He walked for more than an hour—bluffing, pretending to be busy.

He re-entered Herman's at a little after ten—there was more of a crowd there, and the place was growing noisy. He looked up without any uncertainty at the blackboard where Herman's chalked up race results and ball-game scores.

"Hi, Dummy!" Fritz greeted him with a broad grin. Men at the bar turned to look at Julius, making way for him.

The blackboard said: "Jeff by a kayo —55 seconds of Round One."

Nate Gardner and the Philadelphia crowd gathered around, and Mr. Gardner put out his hand.

"Shake, son," he said. "No hard feelings!" He was liquored, but the drinks had only made him expansive. His hot handclasp gave Julius Brown a sense of something more than equality—the sense of his own rightness, of being a man among other men, and a better, surer man than most.

He handed his receipt back to Fritz.

"You can put it on my book," he said. "I'll be in Monday. But right now," he added, "I'll buy drinks for the house!"

He took his own drink gravely, unsmiling. Afterward, on his tumbled cot behind the rack of clothes at Weitekamp's, he could not tell whether the glow in him was due to his first taste of whisky or to his first experience of a crowd's applause.

CHAPTER V

JAMES J. CORBETT

JIM CORBETT slipped the champion's plunging left. Jeff's right hand caught him high on the left shoulder, swiftly hunched. He rode the terrific punch back to the ropes, ducked and laughed. He ducked under the Big Fellow's left hand again—and this time he hooked his own left. He flashed three punches, lightning fast, like the flicker of a snake's tongue. Twice he hooked to the body, bringing down the champion's right hand. The third punch cracked on Jeff's jaw, jerking the champ's head back.

Julius looked up into the blinding heat of the ring lamps. He sat straight, arms folded. Perspiration drenched him—the May night was warm, and the arcs over the ring glowed white-hot like a steel-furnace. The heat at the ringside was agonizing.

Not afraid, but tight with pain, Julius looked up into the glaring lamps, watching Jim Jeffries go steadily into the twenty-third round of a battle that was like a nightmare.

He saw the Big Fellow give way slowly, bringing Corbett back away from the ropes toward the center of the ring. The champion's right eye was almost shut and his nose and mouth were battered so that red stained his chest—but he grinned a little, briefly, and spat a fleck of blood from his lips. He pushed Corbett away, plunged after him again. Gentleman Jim broke swiftly out of range, tantalizing the Big Fellow with speed, and laughing at him.

Jim Jeffries charged. Corbett danced back—and the crowd's roar had a jeer in it. The crowd was laughing, too. The crowd was laughing with Corbett, watching him dazzle and bruise and stupefy a champion who could have destroyed him with a single punch landed squarely.

Dumb Julius tightened at the crowd's jeering, but his pain had anger in it rather than fear. He hated a crowd that could mock the thing Jim Jeffries was doing. He himself saw the Big Fellow always crowding in, taking the kind of beating that hurt but did not destroy—yet always trying, always watching, always intent on his own brief chance to win. Julius hated the crowd for laughing, not seeing what he himself could see.

Jim Corbett was lithe, black-haired, white-skinned and smiling. For twenty-two rounds he had raked the brown grizzly from California with every punch in the book. He had stabbed his left hand at will into the Big Fellow's bleeding mouth. He had hooked the left in short, vicious, cracking hooks to body and face. The champion's tremendous left hand never quite reached him, and Corbett had laughed again and again at the huge sweep of Jim Jeffries' right. He had slipped, blocked, sidestepped—moving around the Big Fellow, stepping in

and stepping out—until at times Jeff stood still in the center of the ring, hands down, looking with a sardonic grin at the smaller man while the crowd rocked with laughter and jeered him.

Now, going into the twenty-third, Corbett was still unmarked, still fast and confident. Stepping back out of the clinch, he said: "Try it again, Jeff!" He looked over his shoulder at the ringside, laughed and said something that Julius did not hear. The Big Fellow rushed again—and Corbett, standing straight up, blocked and broke ground swiftly. He peppered his left hand into the champion's face, rode the rush back to the ropes again and clinched.

Once more, wearily, with a tired glint of amusement at the crowd's uproar, the champion moved backward toward the ring center, bringing Corbett away from the ropes. He wrestled, laying his weight grimly on Corbett's shoulder. The referee stepped in.

Two and a half rounds more, and Corbett would win a hands-down decision—the world's title with it.

Julius knew that. Up in the ring, Jim Jeffries knew it, too. But Big Jeff still stubbornly fought his own fight, plunging with all his power at every tantalizing chance. And Julius Brown, staring through salt sweat up into the ring lamps' glare, still felt secure about Jim Jeffries' own kind of greatness. He felt no fear. He was not sure of the fight's outcome. He was sure, in his own dumb way, of James J. Jeffries.

The pain and anger tightened in him because the Big Fellow was being fooled, taunted, cut by small hurts and held up to the mob's jeering. Julius was used to ridicule for himself, but for James J. Jeffries —

He saw the men come out of that clinch in the twenty-third. He saw Corbett break back smoothly, as always, to just beyond the reach of the crouching champion's left hand. He saw Jeff, brown and huge and blood-splashed, crowd in again doggedly.

Jeff tried again, savagely intent as he drove in his left. And this time, by the space of time's least measure, James J. Corbett was not quick enough. The Big Fellow's left hand jolted at Jim Corbett, snapping two hundred and ten pounds of weight into the six-inch blast of the big fist. The jolt cracked on Corbett's jaw while the smile still curled his lips.

Corbett's arm jerked, suddenly limp—

At the crack of the punch, Corbett's whole body jerked back—then he bowed, sagged and fell forward in a crazy sprawl. His head banged the ring floor.

The crowd leaped up—Dumb Julius held himself quite still, not breathing. The crowd's yell had a screaming edge, then died suddenly. Julius watched while Jim Corbett fumbled with numb arms for some purchase on the canvas. Charley White bent over him, counting. In the queer silence, Dumb Julius stared up into the blinding lights, watched Corbett get to his hands and knees, watched him shake his head in a dead daze—

Julius Brown saw the champion stand up out of his crouch, hands down, looking at the man on the floor. He saw Jeff's eyes narrow, his battered lips working slowly, methodically, chewing his gum.

Corbett faltered, straining at the canvas. He smiled into the ring lamps—a vacant, silly smile, the ghost of his taunting laugh. He shivered, collapsed and sprawled forward again. He was out.

The mob's outcry was brief, sullen, scattering into a clamor that had no cheers in it for the champion. The crowd milled around the ring, and Jim Jeffries bent to pick up the beaten man, straining huge muscles at the dead weight while seconds and handlers crowded in. Then Brady was pounding the Big Fellow on the back, Jack Jeffries was trying to bundle him into the red

sweater, and the Big Fellow was laughing, shaking his head at the long struggle Corbett had given him.

Corbett got up out of his corner, finally, and the crowd's cheer was a sudden outburst—sharp, clamorous and warm. Corbett was unsteady, still, and chalk-white, but he managed to smile. He went over to shake the champion's hand.

Julius went away, then.

He got his look at Jeff—Jeff was laughing, patting Corbett on the back. Jeff had the gloves off. His hands were still bandaged, and he was wearing the red sweater. Jeff was laughing, but the crowd was clapping for the man he had beaten.

After the long ride home and the walk down Broadway to Bowen Street, Julius was very tired, but he kept his spark of anger against the crowd's jeers. Several men spoke to him when he entered Herman's, and a couple of the neighborhood soaks followed him to the end of the bar where Sully Reid was paying off. Julius gave them no attention.

"Well," Sully said, "it's a tough night for the short-enders."

He took the ticket from Julius, filed it on the spindle, and counted out a little sheaf of currency—two hundred and sixty-five dollars. Julius had covered an even hundred of Corbett money at 10-to-6, and Sully held out five as commission. Julius banked his winnings with Fritz in the big safe.

Singer Burke was there with one of his men, guarding the bookmaker's bank roll. He grinned at Julius.

"Riding with the champ is all right while it lasts," he said, "but they'll get you in the end, Dummy. A champeen always goes in once too often."

"Jeff's different!" Julius Brown said it fiercely—so fiercely and suddenly that Burke threw back his head and guffawed.

Bystanders joined in the laugh. Julius felt the blood drain from his face, leaving it cold with sweat. But even then, swiftly, he knew that his pride and his anger were beyond the reach of wordy argument in a barroom. He made no answer, then—he saved his answer, knowing that he must have time to give it the rightness he craved.

A man at the bar jerked his thumb toward the door as Julius went out—he was explaining matters to a stranger.

"They call him Dumb Julius," he man said.

CHAPTER VI

FIGHT TOWN

IT was more than a year later that Julius saw the Big Fellow fight again—and this time, instead of taking the tedious ride to Coney, Julius crossed the continent. He went out to San Francisco to see James J. Jeffries defend his title against Gus Ruhlin, the Akron Giant.

The Julius Brown who signaled his cab to stop in front of the Court Hotel on Geary Street, on the drizzling afternoon of November 15, 1901, was a far cry from the lad in thin shoes who had watched Big Jim Jeffries fight Old Fitz a little more than two years before.

Julius waited in the cab while the driver set his brake, climbed off the seat and carried the hitching-strap and its iron weight forward to the horse's head. He heard the iron clang on the pavement. The cabby came to the door, and Julius got out, hurried into the Court lobby and waited. The cabby was in yellow oilskins, and took his time with Julius's bag—the sifting cold rain meant nothing to him. Julius gave the man a dollar bill carelessly, and the hotel porter came forward to take the suitcase. Then, through a crowded lobby smelling of wet clothes and warm, alcoholic odors from the bar, Julius walked slowly to the desk.

The excitement in him was deep and completely satisfying.

At the desk he ordered a good room, with bath, signed the register and said to the clerk: "I ordered a fight ticket held here. The name is Brown. Shall I pick it up now?"

The clerk was a thin man, flustered by the rush of business and the clamor in the lobby. He squinted at the new name in the book, fussed in the drawer of his desk. He muttered, "Indeed," several times. A stout man in a frock coat stood near by, chatting with a couple of guests, and as Julius glanced at him the stout man glanced at Julius. Julius tagged him as manager of the hotel.

"I wired ahead for a fight ticket," Julius told him. He spoke directly, quietly, with a little nod of his head toward the fumbling clerk. "The name is Brown—New York city," he added.

Julius wore a suit of quiet gray—a fine, firm cloth. His glance was perfectly assured. He had done business with a good many hotel managers.

The stout man came forward, extending his hand. "My name is Grayson," he said. "I'm manager here. What can I do for you?" He glanced over at the clerk. "Look, Willis," he said, "Mr. Brown's fight ticket will be in the safe. Though possibly," he said to Julius, "you'd prefer us to hold it here until after dinner."

The clerk was reaching into the safe.

"I'll take a look, if you please. I ordered a good seat, and I'd like to check."

"Exactly," Grayson said. "Exactly." The clerk held out the ticket.

Julius examined it. It was ringside, Row A. Grayson said: "It's on an aisle. I think I know the numbering." Julius nodded, tossed the ticket back and took out his wallet.

"I'll pay for it now," he said, "but I'll call for it after dinner."

Mr. Grayson smiled broadly. "No hurry," he said, but he picked up Julius's twenty and handed it to the clerk. He looked at the entry in the register. "This is the best you can do for Mr. Brown, Willis?" To Julius he explained: "We're crowded tonight—I expect we'll be filled before dark."

"Is there any Ruhlin money around?" Julius asked.

Grayson's frown was doubtful. "Mr. Staley—Denver Jim Staley—is offering some Ruhlin money, I understand. But he wants three-to-one for it. Mr. Shea, in the buffet here, could direct you, but—"

"I'll be down later," Julius said. He shook hands pleasantly with Mr. Grayson. "I'm obliged to you, sir."

In his room, he opened his bag and shook out another suit while the porter waited. He said: "Please have this pressed—and bring it back in an hour." The suit was a warm brown cheviot, more expensive than the gray he had worn on the trip. The porter hesitated. "It's—It'll take longer than that, sir," he said. "Perhaps the first thing in the morning—"

Julius checked his impulse to go down and talk valet service to Mr. Grayson. The impulse made him smile quickly.

"Never mind it, then," he said to the porter. "I'm just as much obliged." He took half a dollar from his pocket, and the man thanked him and left.

Julius Brown sat contentedly on the edge of his bed, gazing out at the gray weather—he had already heard it called "unusual." He smiled a little. He relaxed. Without any phrasing of words and thoughts, he enjoyed the feel of rightness in the place where he was and the thing he was doing.

His every cent of ready cash was in his pocket—twelve hundred dollars. That was right. The money in his wallet, furthermore, was enough to command respect anywhere, whenever he laid it on the line to back Jim Jeffries. That was right, too—that was what he had schemed, slaved, hurried and driven himself for, in the long months past.

Back in New York, he had a half interest in two more shops, farther up-

town. Durban Breed, the lawyer, had put him in the way of them and advanced part of the money he needed to buy in. He had put Rudolph, the sharp-nosed cleaner, to working outside, with two lads calling and delivering. In any of a score of bars and hotels back there, men would mention Julius as a first-rate hustler. He had built a business—even while he sat on his bed, smiling contentedly at the gray drizzle that hid the San Francisco skyline, those shops in New York were earning money for him.

He drowsed a little, resting after the long trip.

It came to him at length that the Big Fellow was resting, too, that afternoon, across the bay in Oakland—training finished, ready for the gong against Gus Ruhlin. He stood up, thinking of that. He felt the deep, satisfying thrill of it.

HE left the room, locked it, and went downstairs. The crowd in the bar was loud, jovial, yet excited—and it was a new crowd to Julius. There were dandies there in cutaways and top hats, there were cattlemen, there were miners in from the hills or down from the Klondike—mingled with them were the city men, out early from their offices, milling into the fight night throng. Shouldering his way toward the bar, Julius got the feel of the crowd more mixed, more mingled, warmer, than any he had encountered in New York.

"—preachers can't stop it. It'll go on."

"There was a line-up on Larkin Street, waiting for 'em to open up the Pavilion, at three o'clock. In the rain, too."

"Well, they say Gus is a tough customer—"

Julius got scraps from the buzz of talk.

Shea, the head bartender, directed him across the crowd again to a man sitting at one of the tables against the wall.

"That's Mr. Staley," he said. "I think he'll accommodate you." Julius made his way to Staley's table.

"I want three-to-one," Denver Jim Staley said shortly, when Julius had introduced himself. He was a heavy, slow-spoken man with hostile eyes, and Julius tagged him at once as a meat-hunter rather than a sportsman. A couple of other men sat at the table with him, and there were three or four others standing, evidently in the same party. Staley did not rise. The men looked silently at Julius.

"I can't cover much at that price," Julius explained. "I'm from out of town, and I have only a little cash with me. But I'd like some of it."

"A hundred?" Staley gave him a slow, insolent smile.

Julius answered the smile and bluffed a little, feeling sure of his man. He said quietly: "I'd rather see a little more than that, Mr. Staley—will you make it five?"

Staley's eyes were quick and hard.

"Ruhlin has only an outside chance," he said. "I'll lay a hundred against your three, but that's all." The insolence had left his face and he was angry.

But Julius was carefully polite, smiling a little.

"I'm sorry to have troubled you," he said. He made his way back to the bar.

He caught Shea's eye, and Shea grinned at him. "Any good?" Julius shook his head.

"Mr. Staley could spare only a hundred," he said, "and I didn't want to fool with it. Will you fix me up a whisky sour?"

Shea waited on him.

Julius wanted to have money down on Jeff, and the odds did not bother him—his comfort came from the size of his own risk, rather than from what he stood to win. But it pleased him to have set Denver Jim Staley back on his heels.

and it pleased him to have turned the story over, casually, to the head bartender. The story would get around.

The fight-night crowd clamored at the long bar, and Julius felt a glow at the crowd's excitement—yet also he found it puzzling. He could see no reason for a line-up outside the arena in the rain, no reason for a special train up from Los Angeles, no reason for the crowd's temperature of suspense. True, the Big Fellow had not had a real fight in eighteen months—but Julius could not believe that Ruhlin figured to give him one that night. Gus had fought Jeffries a twenty-round draw in San Francisco four years before, but Fitzsimmons had knocked Ruhlin out, later, and so had Tom Sharkey. Julius could not see that Gus was even a good 3-to-1 chance.

Then, warmed by his drink and the crowd's clamor, Julius found his answer —it went to his head a little, like liquor.

The town's excitement might have, he saw, the same reason as his own. He had not crossed the continent because he thought the Ruhlin fight would be close, and San Francisco did not expect the fight to be close—the odds proved that. The town was excited, as he was, by something legendary and brutal and glamorous—something that had nothing to do with the outcome of a fight. The town was a fight town. Dumb Julius felt warm and secure and at home.

CHAPTER VII

THE AKRON GIANT

THE Big Fellow was there, waiting. Julius looked up from the ringside into Jim Jeffries's corner, not ten feet distant. Overhead, floodlights sputtered in a canopy that a crew of workmen had just hoisted above the ring, and a kinetoscope operator trained his camera from beside a ringpost twenty-four feet away. Julius looked up into the sputtering glare, already beginning to grow hot, and saw Jim Jeffries crouching on his stool, ready to go.

And Julius knew that he was nearer than he had ever been before to the thing that he wanted.

"—on behalf of Sailor Tom Sharkey!"

Julius saw the champion grin while Billy Jordan bawled out the tough sailor's challenge to the winner—the crowd whooped and yelled at Sharkey's name. Then Jordan was leading the referee to the center of the ring—

"—Mister Harry Corbett, the referee!"

Again the crowd's roar. Corbett beckoned to the fighters' corners. Jim Jeffries topped his handlers by a head, even to Julius, looking up from below. He walked out—Billy Delaney, Brother Jack, big Bob Armstrong and Kid Eagan crowding around him. Jeff had the red sweater over his shoulders. He was chewing gum.

Gus Ruhlin came out.

The Akron Giant was a smaller man than Jeff—he looked pallid under the lamps, and he had his mouth open stupidly. Madden, Denver Ed Martin and his other seconds shoved close to him in the huddle. Denver Ed said something to Jeff, trying to sneer at Jeff's grin. The referee took Ruhlin's arm and Big Jeff's, and began to talk.

The crowd kept up a rapid fire of shouting at the ring, and the Pavilion echoed with noise—noise heightening and growing more shrill, waiting the first clang of the gong.

The fighters turned back. The seconds crawled through the ropes—in Jeff's corner, Delaney turned back to slap the Big Fellow on the shoulder. Jeff did not turn his head. But Julius saw the picture of Jim Jeffries as he wanted to see him—Jeff had his gloved hands open on his knees, his big torso crouched, alert, his feet well apart. He was looking across the ring at Gus Ruhlin. Jeff's eyes were slitted against the heat and glare of the limelight. He

looked the figure of a great fighting man.

The clang of the gong was fierce, abrupt.

Jeff walked out deliberately, touched hands with Ruhlin, and the Akron man circled cautiously away. The champion settled into his crouch and followed. Even in the high uproar of the crowd, Julius could hear distinctly the sharp creak and scuffle of the Big Fellow's shoes on the canvas—a sound both slithering and staccato that gave rhythm to his rush. Ruhlin swung out wildly with both hands. Jeff grinned, rushed him, pumping the left, and Ruhlin grabbed. Jeff roughed him in the clinch, talking and grinning and cuffing at him, and the crowd yelled when Ruhlin complained to the referee. Corbett shoved the men apart.

Julius knew the end—and the crowd, by the angry derision in its yell, did, too. Dumb Julius watched Jeffries himself. He swayed a little, unconsciously, to the swing of Jeff's big shoulder. The intent, inquiring look of Jeff's face fascinated him. He liked the limber flex of his legs. Corbett had made the champion look blundering and slow, but he was not and never had been. He was huge, powerful, heavy—but he moved like a cat. He was fast.

Ruhlin squawked to the referee at the end of the round—and in the next, lashing out at Jeff more viciously, he kept up his complaints. Jeff was hitting him low, he yelled, pointing. Jeff was roughing him, using a shoulder in the clinches. Ruhlin jabbered away, giving an edge of farce to the battle. Jeff grinned once or twice, making some remark to Harry Corbett. They went into the third.

The crowd roared at Jeff to knock him over and shut him up. It hooted Ruhlin, stirred to anger by the man's protests. And in the third round Jeffries went in to end it.

Through the third and fourth, Dumb Julius watched the champion go in grimly, methodically, to cut the other man down. He saw Jeff as a fighting machine, impersonal and smoothly geared. Ruhlin fought fiercely in flurries—once his right hand smashed the Big Fellow squarely in the mouth, with all Ruhlin's weight behind it. Jeff stepped back, shook his head and smiled. Then he went in again. Ruhlin yelled to the referee. He yelled to the ringsiders. In one frantic flurry of punching, he drifted his punches low.

"That's what he wants!" he yelled. Jeff shoved him savagely away.

Twice in the fourth round Jeff drove in suddenly, trying for a knockout. twice Ruhlin got away, jabbering. Jeff stepped suddenly out of his crouch, swung twice—left and right—and the Akron Giant wobbled and fell. He was up at "Nine," stumbling. The bell rang. Jeff stopped short. The crowd's clamor did not let up during the intermission. Jeff slid out fast for the fifth, caught Ruhlin, knocked him over. Ruhlin got up, swung wildly, and stumbled into the ropes and went down when Jeff rushed. Jeff eased off when Ruhlin got up. He toyed with him, touching him up, watching for a spot to finish it. Jeff shifted suddenly, drove his right to the midriff, swung around with the punch and walked away. Jeff nodded to the ringside. He had finished his man. But the bell rang—and Jeff turned, astonished, then grinned at the crowd. The gong had fooled him.

The crowd had been fooled in the same way, and Julius felt it—felt the fever of the kill sweep the mob, shrilling its uproar, and felt the crowd stop short at the sudden ending. Then, though, bedlam rocked the Pavilion, and Julius stood up when the mob did. He did not yell. The yelling around him was enough. The uproar stormed at the ring, but Julius watched the Big Fellow. Jeff looked across at Ruhlin's handlers crowding around their man. He turned and said something to Bob Armstrong,

the big negro, then glanced down at the ringside, grinning at the noise.

Julius almost caught the champion's glance—the brief thrill went deep. Jeff looked across at Ruhlin's corner again.

Denver Ed Martin, leaving Ruhlin, was talking to Corbett. Julius saw the referee shrug, follow Martin back to the corner across the ring to Jeff, stopped and spoke to him, reached for his right glove. Jeff stood up. The mob's uproar increased.

Jim Jeffries went over to Ruhlin's corner, then—tumult seething around the ring—leaned over and asked a question. Julius could see Ruhlin yelling at him, jabbering—and then the Big Fellow turned away with an expression of disgust on his face. The fight was over. Gus Ruhlin claimed he had been hurt and could not continue.

The riot began—but Dumb Julius, hustled and shoved in the crowd, looked up intently for a moment at the huge bulk of Jim Jeffries leaning on the ropes, his figure limned by the lights. That was what he had come to see. He was seeing it. He wanted to remember it.

All the way back to the hotel, Julius carried that vivid picture in his mind's eye—and, as curious background to it, the confused and clamorous memory of the rioting mob. That mob was angry, excited, desperately intent on the brief surge of battle under the ring lamps. Julius liked that mob—it was a fight-town mob. Jolting back to the hotel, Julius Brown made up his mind to another plunge.

At the Court bar he ordered a toddy. Another bartender served him, but Shea came over and called him by name.

"You won your money tonight, Mr. Brown," he remarked.

Julius said: "I'm moving out to San Francisco, Mr. Shea—I'm going to sell out my business in New York, and I'll need a lawyer to draw up the papers. Who's the best lawyer in town?"

Shea's Irish mug wrinkled suddenly with a gold-toothed grin. He made a little pointing gesture. "The best lawyer in San Francisco is standing right beside you!"

Julius laughed. The omen flooded him with a warmth that was like intoxication. He turned, met the broad smile of the pudgy man beside him—

"Well," the pudgy man said, "at any rate, I'm a lawyer!"

Julius reached for his wallet.

CHAPTER VIII

AND JULIUS REMEMBERS

"Not later than July 5, 1910, before the club offering the best financial inducement, for a side bet of $10,000 and 75 per cent of the purse—"

Julius Brown, reading the newspaper story with his morning coffee, smiled a little, but his eyes were thoughtful. The story described the signing of articles for the Jeffries-Johnson fight. . . .

On the afternoon of October 29, 1909, photographers fired flashlights in a New York hotel room, where four men posed at a table with papers and fountain pens. Vapor from the flashlights mushroomed against the ceiling until the room was murky with it.

James J. Jeffries, retired and undefeated heavyweight champion of the world, was one of the four men at the table—a Jeffries thirty-four years old, growing bald, fifteen pounds overweight and five years out of the ring. Sam Berger, managing Jeff's comeback, was another. Jack Johnson sat with them, and so did George Little, the black champion's manager.

Jeffries was sullen, that day, an angry spark in his brown eyes. He had refused to "meet" Johnson—he had little to say, but he would not talk to Johnson at all.

The room was crowded with reporters, cameramen, sports followers and

newspaper experts, and the flashlight vapor fogged it.

"All right," George Little said, "now let's sign the papers."

Berger said: "Phew! Wait a minute —wait till the damn smoke clears out!" And big Jack Johnson winked at the crowd, threw back his head and laughed.

"Lawd, gen'mum—do I have to clear out without signing?"

The crowd guffawed and cackled at the black champion's joke, but Jim Jeffries did not join in.

"Give me a pen," he said to Sam Berger. . . .

JULIUS took out a cigarette, tapped it on the table and lighted it. He tasted his coffee again.

That scene in the New York hotel room, the day before, was completely vivid to him. He could see Jim Jeffries —black browed and huge, a serious phlegmatic man, heavy in the waist, now, with hair thinning back from the temples. He could picture the big black man from Galveston—he could picture Jack Johnson flashing the golden smile and cracking jokes while Big Jeff sat in angry silence.

Those two men were now signed to enter a twenty-four-foot ring, lace five-ounce gloves on their fists, and fight each other forty-five rounds or more to a finish—

"Not later than July 5, 1910—"

Julius got up abruptly, picked his hat off the tree and started out of the hotel dining room.

"You're in a hurry this morning, Mr. Brown," the waiter said, coming up with an urn of fresh coffee.

"Yes, I'm in a hurry, Max."

Julius left the hotel, cut over to Market Street, and walked briskly but quite aimlessly through the hurry of early morning traffic.

Eight years before, playing his hunch about the town just as completely as he had always played his hero-worshiping certainty of Big Jim Jeffries, Julius had adopted San Francisco as his home. It had worked out well—both hunches had worked out magnificently well. But now, pacing through the thronging city workers on Market Street, he was conscious of a trouble.

He had wanted Jeffries, unbeaten and unbeatable, to come back and fight Jack Johnson. He had had no notions about white supremacy—the matter did not interest him—but he had wanted to see the Big Fellow in the ring again, crouching and grim and intent, moving like a cat and boring in against a man who could make him fight.

He had wanted Jeffries to fight Johnson. Johnson could make him fight—two weeks before, down at Colma, Julius had seen the black giant come off the floor to flatten Stanley Ketchel with a blasting savagery that was already a classic of the ring. Johnson had toyed with Tommy Burns. He had played with big Al Kaufman. He had stopped old Bob Fitzsimmons in two rounds. The Negro could give any man a fight.

Now Jeffries was signed, at last—and Jack Johnson had joked about it. Julius had seen the big black man joke and pour leather. Julius knew the famous golden smile.

He walked hard, trying to walk his trouble off.

His ordinary working day was a hurried, steady routine—he had five establishments in San Francisco, and was opening another in Oakland. With Nick Schraft, he was half owner of a tailoring shop that catered to the sporting and political crowd. Nick had tailored Abe Ruef and Francis J. Heney, Lew Powell and Jimmy Britt. He had once made a suit for John L. Sullivan—the characteristic gray costume, with long coat and black-braided outseams to the trousers. Neither Nick nor Julius was ever off the job—the two made a first-rate team. Nick was the showy partner, though.

Julius was the driving, tireless, quiet one.

But this morning Julius walked the pavement because his mind would not think for him while he worked. His mind busied itself strangely with pictures out of the past, and those pictures had some vague connection with his trouble.

His mind flashed the picture of Jeff standing at the ropes, that night of the Ruhlin fiasco—his wide-shouldered bulk, sculptured by the ring lamps—black Bob Armstrong pulling at his left hand, trying to get the glove off—the mob swirling in toward the ring. He remembered, later, the second fight with Old Fitz, at the Valencia Street arena. Swiftly, with almost unbearable vividness, he got the sight and sound and smell of that hot July night—wind had whipped rents in the arena's canvas canopy that night, stirring the trampled dust of the ringside lot, so that the smell of dust was a part of the picture. He remembered the eighth round—Jeff crouching, shuffling in, and Old Bob slashing him from every angle with brittle hands—Jeff set back on his heels, time and again—Fitz breaking back out of a clinch, grinning, flicking his left at the gash over Jeff's eye—then the Big Fellow's crushing left hand, twice—

Julius tried to picture that left hand sweeping the big black man, Jack Johnson, off his feet. He tried to picture the fierce and sudden one-two—the thud of the huge fist on Lanky Bob's flat belly, the crack of the fist on his jaw. He could picture the way Fitz had toppled, then—he could see Fitz, a little afterward, tottering at the ropes, tearing off his gloves and throwing them out into the crowd.

He could see Jeff in every picture—big Jim Jeffries, undefeated champion of the world—grim and bloodied as he took his beating, but unshaken, waiting his moment.

Corbett had tried him again, too, and Julius Brown had seen that.

He had seen the Big Fellow outspeed and outpunch the gallant dancing master—this time easily, with Corbett on the floor twice before six rounds were gone. He had seen the smother of Corbett's blows bounce off, drawing only a little blood, while Jim Jeffries followed in, measuring, punching and hurting. He remembered Corbett's smile, Corbett's talk—and he remembered the white pain on Corbett's face after that knockout in the tenth. They stood Corbett up on the ropes and the crowd cheered him, not Jeff, but Corbett's body was blotched at the midriff and his white muscles were cramped and knotted from the hurt of Jeff's finishing punch.

Julius remembered it all—saw it all—

He remembered so much more.

HE got for the first time some clear notion of what he himself had done, during all those years of his dumb hero worship. His pictures of Big Jeff's fights went all the way back to that first night at the Coney Island Sporting Club, when the Big Fellow won his belt—and along with his picture of the ringside, Dumb Julius looked at a few unaccustomed pictures of himself.

There was no great pride in him—only a recurrent warmth and certainty. He had been right, all along. He saw the thin, sallow lad that he had been—a shabby lad in paper-thin shoes—hustled by the Surf Avenue cops when the champion left his dressing room at Coney. He saw himself, still thin and shabby, perched in the gallery when tough Tom Sharkey fought himself out against the Big Fellow. He saw himself as a kid, then grown quietly to his strange early manhood—half man and still half overgrown boy—and he saw successive pictures of the changes that had come upon him. They were pictures of Julius Brown, Dumb Julius, at the

ringside of a Jeffries fight—Julius Brown crossing the bay with Nick to visit Jeff's training quarters in Oakland—Julius Brown sitting with other men in the Court bar of an evening, gravely listening while the others fanned over their choices and opinions as to Kid McCoy or the Britt boys or Billy Papke or Sam Langford. Julius could see a man still slender in build, still sallow in complexion, but quietly well-dressed, full of a grown man's confidence—a man who did not speak often, but was listened to, anywhere, when he did.

Julius walked hard, not thinking in his wonted fashion, but seeing those pictures. He left Market at Powell, made a wide detour and re-entered the big thoroughfare at Kearny. He could look down the street, then, and see the big sign on Schraft's—even in the misted morning sunlight, he could see the gilded cut-out letters of the sign, though he could not read it clearly. Farther down Market, he knew, was one of his own cleaning shops—white-fronted, clean, brisk, doing a good business. There were four others like it. He had money. He knew what comfort was. When Jeff came West to fight Jack Johnson—

He knew suddenly what his trouble was.

He did not try to put it into words, but he knew.

James J. Jeffries had no championship, now, to carry into the ring against Jack Johnson's black, lazy cunning and his cruel fists—to Dumb Julius, the Big Fellow would never be the champion of one race against another. What Jim Jeffries would risk in the ring, as far as Julius was concerned, was all the faith, all the certainty, all the glamour and all the security that Julius had ever known.

That moment of insight came to Dumb Julius, walking briskly down Market Street—an unobtrusive small man, silent and intent—

The moment of insight was like a physical blow. Julius took it, faced it, went on walking. He knew what his trouble was. He knew what great risk of his own had been pledged the day before, in that New York hotel room, under the flashlight smoke.

He took it, and walked on.

He entered Schraft's, nodded to a fitter in the showroom, and walked back to Nick's office. Nick greeted him with a quick grin on his hard, sharp humorous face.

"I saw Eddie Graney this morning," Nick said. "He says they're going to get the big fight out here—says Coffroth is willing to lay money on it." Julius had switched his thinking intently to other matters. Nick's fight talk disconcerted him. Nick asked: "What's the matter, Dummy?"

By habit, Julius would have had either to answer the question honestly or keep silent. He said nothing. Nick Schraft was used to that, though. He laughed.

"Who'll win, Dummy?" he asked, joking.

Julius answered that question.

He said gravely: "I don't know, Nick." And his answer astonished him almost as much as it did his partner.

CHAPTER IX

IT'LL BE RENO

JUNE 18, 1910—

Dumb Julius took another thousand from Denver Jim Staley that night, and the feud between them took fresh fire from a minor extravaganza in the Jeffries-Johnson build-up.

The sports world had gone crazy. The dizzy prelude to the big fight gathered speed and madness as it approached the climax. In its last two weeks it fevered the sports, the gamblers, the moralists, the politicians, and the preachers of five countries into a turmoil unique in the ring's history. Louis Blot's "rebellion,"

which simmered out in hot air on the afternoon of June 18, was only one more symptom of the big fight fever of 1910.

Governor Gillette of California, breathing fire and righteousness, had ruled that no big fight—no prizefight of any kind—would be held in the Golden State.

Louis Blot, promoting a Langford-Kaufman contest, had announced to all and sundry that his fight would be pulled off on schedule, regardless; and his defiance, bruited in pool rooms and bars and sports pages, was tagged Blot's Rebellion. Denver Jim Staley, knowing that Mayor McCarthy, the supervisors, and influential San Francisco sportsmen were backing Blot, had offered a barroom bet of one thousand dollars on Blot to win.

Julius Brown had smiled and countered with two thousand on the governor of the state—before nightfall on the 18th, Governor Gillette had moved five companies of national guard troops into the Presidio.

A third man sat at dinner with Julius and Nick Schraft at the Plaza Exchange that night, when Denver Jim showed up. The third man only glanced at Denver Jim, but his twisted mouth took the edge of a grin when he sighted Kid Murray, Denver's bodyguard, standing close. Singer Burke was gray about the temples, now, heavier than he had been.

Denver said abruptly: "Congratulations, Mister Brown." Julius thanked him quietly, not rising, and Staley opened his wallet, took out the bills and laid them on the table. "One thousand," he said. Then he asked: "Ready to lay it out on Jeffries yet?"

The stir of an old anger made Julius careful.

"I'm still waiting," he answered. Denver Jim laughed shortly, contemptuously.

Nick Schraft's grin was malicious. He said: "That's an even-money laugh, Denver—would you make an even-money bet?"

Denver flushed at the taunt, and Kid Murray scowled. Burke lifted an eyebrow inquiringly at Julius, and Singer's glance was hopeful and vicious, but Julius gave no sign. Nick leaned back in his chair, fingering his glass of port and grinning at Denver. The same bitter fever infected men everywhere as the day of the big fight drew nearer—Nick tantalized the bigger man, taunted him lazily; yet the absurd anger between them was deadly serious.

Denver said: "I'm not a fool. I'll bet at today's odds—any amount you want! But I'll bet money, not talk!"

Nick winked at Julius when Denver Jim turned away.

Julius looked thoughtfully at his partner. His anger was deep, yet along with it he felt the old sureness and security again—had felt it ever since the day of his troubled walk on Market Street. He knew the right thing to do, just as ten years before he had known that it was right and secure to lay that first wager of his, five dollars, on Jeff to beat Sailor Sharkey at Coney Island. He knew what to do about Denver Jim Staley and every other casual gambler who figured Jim Jeffries like a number on the roulette wheel or a horse at Emeryville.

Passersby circled the table. The bar was crowded, and the dining tables were between the bar and the row of glass doors opening on the sidewalk. The night was warm, and there were a dozen tables under the awning outside, so that there was a constant movement of guests and waiters back and forth. It was customary, informal, and not unpleasant. Some of the Exchange habitués, knowing of the gamblers' feud between Julius and Denver Jim Staley, had made it a point to hang around.

One of them, Lew Kastner, the lawyer, said to Julius: "Well, Dummy, some more Jeffries money, eh?" Julius answered him seriously. "I'll bet Jeffries," he said, "but not yet." Nick asked Lew to sit with them and have a drink.

"Think the odds will shorten?" Lew

asked. A couple of other acquaintances moved up; Nick invited them to have chairs. Nick said: "There's no man in the world that's 2-to-1 to beat Johnson. The odds are foolish."

Julius did not join in the argument. The odds did not interest him—he knew he would bet Jeffries if he had to give 10-to-1. He waited about laying his money only because it was the thing to do. He did not want to be played for a fool, any more than he wanted Jeff to go into the ring unprepared against Jack Johnson. If Jeff was to go in there as the undefeated fighting man, calm, confident and ready, he—Dumb Julius Brown—wanted to place his money calmly, according to his habit.

He got up from the table, excused himself, and went over to the bar. Harry Ransome, the head bartender, bustled up at his nod.

"Is Mr. Staley still in?" Julius asked.

"Yes, sir, he is. George, will you show Mr. Brown to Mr. Staley's table? It's over by the stair," he said to Julius.

Denver Jim's face was a heavy, hostile mask.

Julius thanked the boy. To Denver he said: "I'd like to place my money the night before the fight, Mr. Staley—suppose we agree to meet at the Hotel Corbin, in Reno, the night of July third."

Denver nodded, keeping his cold eyes on Julius' face.

"I expect to lay out all the cash I can raise," Julius added, "but I'll name the amount in plenty of time for you to cover it."

"All right," Staley said. His lips lifted a little in a smile that was not pleasant. "It'll be Reno!"

Julius turned away, stopped and turned back. Kid Murray had risen from Denver's table. Julius said quietly: "Tell your hooligan to sit down, Mr. Staley!"

On his way out, Julius bade Nick and the others good night, but he nodded once at Singer Burke. The Singer got up, followed him to the door, and the two walked over toward Geary Street and the hotel.

THE rest of that sultry June passed quickly for Dumb Julius.

Business occupied him—to raise cash for his wager on Jim Jeffries, he sold Nick half interest in the cleaning shops, and he drove himself early and late to reorganize his affairs on that basis. Nick wanted to share the Jeffries bet, but Julius would not let him.

"This has to be all mine, Nick. You see," Julius explained, smiling a little, "this is the last chance I'll ever have to bet the Big Fellow." He touched his partner's arm awkwardly. Nick sobered his quick grin.

"Sure," he said. "Sure."

While Julius worked through those hectic days, making ready for his last wager, the fantastic finale of the big fight's build-up reached its dizzy heights—and though he saw through the madness, his own steady intent gave Julius a deep share in the excitement, the growing suspense.

He had seen Jim Jeffries box Choynski in the Dreamland exhibition, a month before. He had visited the camp at Ben Lomond three times, and had seen the Big Fellow work once. On two successive Sundays, Jeff had stolen away from the training camp before dawn, fishing the San Lorenzo all day while the sightseers fretted. But once Julius had seen him go through his routine—three rounds with Choynski, three with black Bob Armstrong, and two mild rounds with Jim Corbett. He had seen the hour's grind at wrestling, rope-skipping, mat exercises. He had seen Jeff stripped at perhaps two hundred and twenty pounds, browned and reddened by the broiling sun, bald, taciturn yet good-humored in his own grim fashion.

Julius knew Jim Jeffries with a kind of silent sureness, and knew what he

would take into the Reno ring against the black champion.

He had seen Jack Johnson, too—had watched him training at Muirhead's, on the ocean front, and had seen him in the ring before the big fight was ever set. He had seen the tame ten rounds of Johnson's fight with Al Kaufman—the crowd hooted and walked out on that fight, but Dumb Julius had watched it to the last round. He had won money from Denver Jim Staley on the Negro's murderous knockout of Stanley Ketchel.

Julius knew what the black man would take into the ring at Reno. He knew these things, working, settling his affairs, feeling the strange thrill of the big fight's nearness.

In New York, they were betting ten to seven on Jeffries, but San Francisco's money went down at ten to six. Tom Corbett held the post of betting commissioner, and his board offered even money that Johnson would stay ten rounds. John L. Sullivan switched from Jeffries to Johnson. Bat Masterson picked Jeff. Johnson worked twelve brilliant rounds on Tuesday, June 28, while Governor Dickerson of Nevada looked on. Jeff went on strike that day, did no boxing, and Jim Corbett broke down and cried at his stubbornness. The next day Hugh McIntosh and the Australian sports delegation arrived in San Francisco, bringing Johnson money, and in Reno the governor and a thousand spectators watched the Big Fellow's workout. Seven hundred fans boarded a three-section special in Chicago—there were ten women aboard. Tom Corbett left to set up betting headquarters in a Reno gambling hall, and a mob packed Rick's Resort, three miles out of Reno, while Li'l Artha worked a whole day for the moving-picture men.

The turmoil mounted. San Francisco baked under a spell of summer heat; the papers reported that Reno was broiling.

At 9:30 on the morning of June 30, Dumb Julius crossed the bay with a yelling crowd of San Francisco fight fans, loaded with luggage chalked: "Reno or Bust!" Singer Burke was with him. They boarded the first section of the special that left Oakland, far behind schedule, an hour later.

The papers quoted James J. Jeffries that morning in a long statement about his year and a half of hard, honest effort. The statement wound up impressively with three words, quoted.

Jim Jeffries said: "I am ready."

Jack Johnson hired a big red Rambler that day, piled his camp followers into it, and toured the town of Reno, waving his cap above his new-shaven head and smiling the golden smile.

Joe Gans, dying in Arizona, sent a telegram to Tex Rickard, asking the favor of a complimentary ringside seat.

Riding the first fight special to Reno, Dumb Julius carried a wallet containing his every dime of ready cash. The total was a little more than twenty-five thousand dollars.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST WAGER

THREE days to go!

And the Reno bedlam gave no speed to the passing of those days—it only punctuated, for each hour, a kind of frantic fear that time would not pass, that the moment would not come, that the big fight would not go on.

"Ten-six on Jeffries—who wants Johnson?" Even money Jack don't stay ten! Even money! Ten-ten!" All day and most of the night—

Souvenir-hawkers harried the crowd. Staring signs placarded every gambling hall on Center Street, and spielers patroled them, yelling the odds. Mobs milled from the hotels, up from the railway sidings, out of tents clustered on vacant lots. Mobs raided the restaurants, feeding in relays. Mobs jammed the lobbies

and pool rooms and thronged the sidewalks in the desert heat of the mornings. By noon the customers were packed four deep around the roulette tables and massed along the bar in every saloon. Center Street was a tangle of assorted vehicles—buckboards off the desert roads, buggies, carriages, automobiles powdered white with dust.

There was no let-up in the bedlam—only a loud monotony that slowly dulled it with weariness. Each train brought its contribution to the growing mob, and the yard engines chuffed and panted, parking special cars on all available sidings. The mob did not wait for daylight. The noon heat did not stifle its noise. All night the lights of Reno blazed and the crowd's clamor continued.

Julius Brown experienced all the excitement and the dread of those feverish days, lived and breathed the suspense of waiting—

On the first day he took his cash to the bank, saving out only a few hundreds for expenses, and bought a certified check. While he waited in the clamor and the heat, then, going with Burke to see the sights of the mad mecca, the check in his wallet fortified him a little. He knew its use.

He saw Johnson clowning for the crowd at Rick's.

He saw Jeffries loafing at the Springs. A barrier of rope held the crowd back while Jeff played cards in the shade of a willow beside his white cottage. The crowd sweated and stared in the full sun, and Julius left quickly, hating the crowd.

He saw Tex Rickard's arena, a crude octagon of raw lumber, three hundred feet across, towering up in the vacant flats east of the town—sun scorched it, workmen sweated and hammered in it, getting it ready for the gladiators and the mob. It had the air of waiting.

There was noise everywhere—noise and heat and that air of waiting—

On the night of July 3, Julius met Denver Jim Staley in the bar of the Hotel Corbin, while a little crowd of sporting men, hangers-on, gamblers, and the Big Fight's war correspondents from half a dozen cities, gathered around to see the checks posted. The big bet had been rumored, and the ceremony drew a crowd.

Dumb Julius laid twenty-five thousand dollars on the line, that night—placing the biggest personal wager of the Jeffries-Johnson fight, and betting Jim Jeffries to win.

The crowd circled around Julius as he came in, Burke at his elbow, and closed in around him. A newspaperman shoved through. The crowd buzzed and laughed, craning at the slip of paper Julius laid on the bar. Denver Jim, hard-faced, sneering at the onlookers' liking for Jeffries money, confronted Julius in the center of the crowd. Julius took no notice of Denver's cold hostility. He took his check quietly out of his wallet and laid it on the bar.

Louis McCool, owner of the hotel, stood behind the mahogany—a smiling, dark-faced little man with fat hands. He was to hold the stakes.

McCool accepted Julius Brown's check with a quick, formal glance. "Yours, Mr. Staley?" he said politely. Denver shoved his check across—a check for sixteen thousand, two hundred and fifty dollars, covering twenty-five thousand at the odds of ten-to-six-and-a-half.

"Pick it up," Denver said.

"The winner can collect at any time within twenty-four hours after the fight ends," McCool announced. "I hand you gentlemen memorandum receipts, signed by me, and each of you had two witnesses to the transaction. In the event of a draw tomorrow, this bet is off. Each of you—"

Julius interrupted, smiling briefly.

"No," he said, "I'm betting Jeffries to win. If it's a draw, Mr. Staley collects."

Denver stared suddenly, but the crowd broke into a scatter of applause, pushing in, looking at Julius.

"That's the talk!" somebody cried. Julius, feeling the warmth and sureness of what he did, smiled again.

"Good!" McCool said. "Good! And now if principals and witnesses care to adjourn to my quarters, the house would be glad to wet the transaction—"

"—playing the fights is a side-line with him." Johnnie Favorite of the San Francisco *Call* was explaining Julius to an Eastern newspaperman.

The other asked: "Friend of Jeff's?" Favorite chuckled.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars' worth!" he said. Barry Lane, of the *Chronicle,* caught Julius by the arm, laughing.

"You can't miss!" he cried out—and Julius stopped short in the crowd, said quietly: "No, I can't miss."

"Do you want to shake on it?"

Denver Jim wanted to make a play of some kind—Julius, betting Jeffries with a cold twenty-five thousand, refusing to call off the bet on a draw, held too much the center of the stage. So Denver offered his hand, tried a smile—

Julius felt no anger any more—he had just finished answering the only affront that had angered him in the past. He had answered it completely, accepting no "out," laying everything he had on Jim Jeffries to win.

He shook Denver's hand.

The crowd's applause was for Julius. Denver Jim Staley was ugly, cocksure, trying to hide behind a gesture that looked sporting, but Julius was glad to shake hands. He was glad and showed it—and the crowd began hand-clapping, boisterous shouting, so that others in the room pushed up to join the excitement. A man in a wide hat slapped a double handful of silver dollars down on the bar.

"Drinks!" he shouted.

McCool held up his fat hands, chuckling.

"The drinks are on the house!" he insisted. It was perfectly safe for McCool —the rôle of stake-holder insured him five hundred or so from the winner.

Bartenders hurried up at McCool's word, and the crowd shoved past Denver Jim Staley, jamming noisily against the mahogany.

That night Julius Brown lay awake for a time, with Singer Burke breathing heavily on the cot beside him. The wager he had made, staking everything he had on the Big Fellow's last fight, was the thing he had always wanted to do—the thing that he had known that he must do, some time. He was quiet and very content, and some of his pictures came back to him again. Pictures that had Fitzsimmons and Sharkey and Gentleman Jim Corbett in them. Pictures of Jim Jeffries, victorious, resting at the ropes under the blaze of the ring lamps. Pictures, very dim, of a queer, skinny kid practicing the Jeffries crouch in front of a fragment of mirror.

They fired volleys of revolver shots in Center Street, that night, saluting the Fourth, clamoring for the big fight. The Reno bedlam went on. But Dumb Julius, even while he lay awake, heard none of it.

CHAPTER XI

DESERT COLOSSEUM

THE desert sky was white with heat, and the heat waves in the big wooden bowl shimmered with a thin odor of new pine planks.

Twenty thousand people were there. Five thousand of them crowded the chairs on the dusty slope surrounding the ring. Twelve thousand banked the huge octagon of bleachers, forty feet high, that rimmed the arena. On the plank wall back of the highest tier of bleacher seats, thousands of others held standing room, crowded five deep, supplying a skyline of white shirts, straw hats, moving hands and shifting bodies.

Twenty thousand people stared through the shimmer of heat waves, watching the white ring, the taut white ropes, the waiting, hemmed-in square of canvas where the last big fight was to be fought.

That was what some called it—the last big fight.

Here in this colosseum of pine planks reared in the desert and ringed by bare, desolate hills, the cruel tradition of ancient Rome was to defy civilization with its last challenge. Here ghosts of all the forgotten gladiators were to strut for a final hour, saluting the mob, hearing the mob's roar, then pass forever into oblivion. Here, in all the modern world, the crowd's blood-yell was to shrill its last, reviving Rome's echoes. Reno, they were saying then, was the ring's last frontier.

For this last entertainment of the colosseum's mob, the final spectacle was to be a fight, not between two men, but between two races of men, white and black.

"I'll take care of the white man's end!" James J. Jeffries had made that promise, months before.

And now the mob was waiting—clamorous, unstable, racked by suspense and sweltering in the desert heat. The mob was waiting, twenty thousand strong. Around four lengths of the ring-ledge, men shading themselves with makeshifts of newspaper and palm-leaf fans were sweating at the clack of typewriters and telegraph instruments, transmitting the suspense to millions waiting at a distance, watching bulletin boards in Chicago, New York, London, Paris or Melbourne. The gladiators' last mob was bigger than any in all history before.

The pressure of the great mob's waiting was almost a tangible thing. It had the feel of men crowding against men. It had the sound of many voices and pounding feet and staccato shouting against a blurred background of incessant noise. It had the odor of hot dust, clothes, human bodies, raw lumber baked in sunlight.

Dumb Julius, with Singer Burke beside him, held a fifty-dollar chair ten feet from the ring-ledge. He sat quietly, arms folded, a straw hat tilted over his eyes. He had not removed his coat, but he was not perspiring. He was almost cold.

Julius looked up into the ring, quite steadily, knowing that an inevitable hour had come and that he was completely ready.

Men began climbing into the white ring, walking across it, calling to each other and making motions. The roar of the crowd swelled up into a crescendo. The mob clapped, stamped its feet, yelled. The hour was nearly two o'clock, thirty minutes past schedule for the first gong, and some of the waiting thousands had been sweating in the heat since nine that morning. The mob's roar was an angry, uncanny thing, like a storm in clear desert sunshine.

Singer Burke growled. "Here we go!"

Julius looked steadily up into the ring, smiling a little.

"Call Jordan in! Let's get under way!" Julius could hear what they were saying in the ring. An attendant in white sweater and cap leaned over the ropes.

"Oh, Mr. Jordan!" he yelled. Gleason and Tex Rickard were in the ring—Tex coatless, with sleeves rolled up and his Stetson pulled down over his eyes, smoking a stub of cigar. At the far corner, below the platform and looking up into the sun, Julius could see old Billy Jordan shoving through the crowd gathered at the ring steps. Jordan was climbing into the ring. That crowd at the far corner was a crowd of notables—the game's great and near-great and once-great.

" 'Ow does it look from up there, Billy?" Against the blur of the mob's noise, Julius could hear Bob Fitzsimmons yell his grinning falsetto at the announcer. The ringside laughed.

Gleason left the ring, and Rickard,

leaning back against the ropes, waved the workmen and attendants away. One of them stopped to speak to him. Rickard said: "Never mind it now." The man crawled through the ropes and walked the ledge toward the nearest steps.

Julius heard Rickard say: "Get Sullivan first."

Billy Jordan took the center of the stage, removed his cap and pointed at the timekeeper. He heard the gong clanging again and again—

"Ladies and gentlemen!" Jordan bellowed.

The sun glinted on Jordan's bald head, and his huge voice compelled a hush from the crowd. At the other corner of the ring, the procession of notables began—

John L. Sullivan, William Muldoon, Jake Kilrain, Battling Nelson, Tommy Burns, Jimmy Britt, Abe Attell, Terry McGovern. There were others. Many more. The men paraded into the ring, mitted the crowd, shuffled their feet on the canvas, grinning at each other. Bob Fitzsimmons laughed at the crowd, and black Sam Langford took a mocking bow at the crowd's hooting.

Jordan waved a telegram, read it: "May the best man win!" Jordan bellowed: "That comes from the former lightweight champion of the world, the Old Master, Joe Gans!"

But the mob's applause had grown desultory by then, and some booed the word from Gans. Gans was a black man. The mob had come to see the white race triumph, and to some it did not matter that Joe Gans was home sick on his deathbed.

The mob began to yell at Jordan, shouting him down. The ring swarmed with the men he had called in.

"Let's have the fight!" the mob yelled. "That's enough! Let's have the fight!"

Jordan introduced the referee, at last. Rickard took off his wide hat, handed it down to the ringside and hitched at his belt. His lips rolled nervously at the cigar stub.

A couple of Reno policemen in blue uniforms took posts at the far corner of the platform. Others moved in, guarding the aisle from the dressing rooms. Three or four Nevada state troopers, khaki-clad and wearing Stetsons, strolled along behind the press benches. A Negro boy carrying a huge palm-leaf fan moved from corner to corner of the platform, not certain which corner Jeff would have.

Then Jordan, from the ring, turned and pointed dramatically down the aisle. The mob seethed, stood up, and its roar became a thunder—

Gray-haired Billy Delaney was leading the black champion into the arena—Delaney, who had been Jeff's trainer, and now hated him. The crowd banked the runway, yelling, and the black champion's party hurried down toward the ring. Big Al Kaufman had a hand on Johnson's shoulder, and Stanley Ketchel, seeming very slender in his black sweater, followed along. Sig Hart and the trainers, Burns and Doc Furey, brought up the rear.

"Cold feet, Jack!" "Now you'll get it!" "How do you like it now?"

The mob, hostile but excited, yelled at the black man—the mob taunted and cheered at the same time.

Dumb Julius turned, standing to watch as Johnson went by. The Negro passed within a few feet of Julius Brown's chair. Julius saw his huge, lithe figure very clearly, saw the shimmer of violet silk lining on the negro's black bathrobe, saw his face and the look in his eyes.

"He'll kill you, Jack!"

Jack Johnson was laughing.

JULIUS waited, then, the mob in turmoil around him—waited as he had waited, years before, to watch the Big Fellow climb into the ring where he was to fight Sharkey or Fitz or Jim Corbett. In some quiet part of his mind, Julius

revived the feel of the rainy night at Coney, of the gale that stirred dust in Coffroth's arena at San Francisco. He waited in a fashion apart from the mob's growing clamor—not feeling the Reno heat, just then, and not seeing the white sky and the rim of desert hills.

Billy Jordan, at the ropes, pointed again suddenly, far out over the ringside. He held his pose. The mob surged up, racking the wooden amphitheatre with sudden dust and tumult. The mob's uproar thundered, and the desert colosseum swayed in the quake of shaken earth.

Jordan kept pointing—

Dumb Julius watched, standing intent in the turmoil, fixing his eyes on the lane where Jeffries would come out.

He saw the Big Fellow, very close to, slowed by the swarming of the crowd. Men left their seats, charged into the opening of the aisle, tried to shake Jeff's hand. The din pounded at him. Jeff pushed his way along, looking at the floor or turning cagily with his head lowered when he recognized a voice.

The Big Fellow slouched in old clothes, his cap pulled down over his face, his eyes narrowed against the glare. The white sunlight paled his tan, blurred the lines in his face.

Julius watched him, saw him pass by, saw the cops hurry in to shove the crowd away. He saw Jeff go to the steps, put his big left hand, not bandaged yet, on the ring-ledge and climb up toward the white ropes.

Julius found himself sitting in his chair again, arms folded, looking straight ahead and not seeing anything. Jim Jeffries was in the ring.

Then the minutes ticked slowly.

Jeff's back was toward Julius—Johnson had laughed when Sam Berger wanted to toss for corners. "He'p yo'self," he had said, and Jeff had picked the corner with his back to the sun. Julius could see Jim Corbett squatting in front of Jeffries, working with the bandages. Berger and Farmer Burns went to Johnson's corner. Ketchel, watching for the Johnson side, stood over Jim Corbett, joking while Corbett worked.

The ring still swarmed with people, and the crowd's clamor grew angry. Johnson stood up once, clenching his bandages and stretching, and Julius saw him look over toward Jeffries without smiling. The black man had quit laughing. Julius saw him squint over at Jeffries, lick his lips nervously—

Julius looked at his watch. It was nearly a quarter to three.

Tex Rickard warned the fighters to hurry. Jeff stood up and began to strip off his old clothes, Berger and black Bob Armstrong helping him. Jeff was wearing purple trunks, cut loose, and a plain belt. Across the ring, Jack Johnson threw off the black bathrobe and sat down again before Julius could get a good look at him. In Jeff's corner, they were lacing on the gloves.

Then Rickard moved about, clearing all but the chief seconds and the announcer out of the ring. Jordan took off his cap again, watched Rickard for the word to go. Tex gave the corners a last glance, nodded at the timekeeper.

The gong began to clang.

"La-dees and gentle-men—"

When Jack Johnson stood up, sleek and black, the sun glinting on his black polished body and shaven scalp, the crowd's outburst had a gasp in it—a gasp of sheer astonishment and awe. But when Jeff's turn came, the applause was a sudden thunder again—direct, fierce, desperately earnest. Billy Jordan waved his arms, and the mob's noise drowned his valedictory roar—

"—an' let 'er go!"

Above the huddle where Tex talked to the men in the center of the ring, Julius Brown could see the big black man's face, entirely serious now. Jack Johnson nodded, frowning a little with the sun in his eyes. He nodded again. Rickard slapped at the men's backs and Johnson smiled suddenly, extending his

gloved hands to Jeff. But Jeff would not shake.

Julius watched the Big Fellow walk back to his corner, scowling into the sun. He saw Berger snatch the towel, crawl through the ropes. He saw Jeff look down at the ringside, his face blank in the sun's glare. He saw Jeff's legs braced wide apart, like the legs of a tired man.

Jeffries turned very slowly to meet the Negro.

The bell rang.

Dumb Julius braced himself, then relaxed. Beside him he heard the sudden hiss of Singer Burke's intaken breath.

"—aagh!"

CHAPTER XII

JACK JOHNSON

A HUSH, brief and oppressive. The stealthy, quick shuffle of ring shoes on taut canvas. Then the Big Fellow lunged forward heavily, pawed his long left at the Negro's face. The black man broke back—

The mob's yell volleyed at the ring.

Julius Brown steeled himself against the slow chill tingling in his body. He tried to feel only the thin heat, the smother of the crowd, the insane hammering of the waves of noise. Jim Jeffries was in there now. Dumb Julius wanted to watch, to see it all—knowing, as he watched, that this was the end, and that what he saw then he would never see again.

Inside the ropes, the big men circled each other, crafty-eyed.

The men wrestled and walked about the ring, pushing each other—each holding dynamite in either hand and never letting it go. Rickard barked sharply at them, breaking them out of a clinch. The crowd yelled. The men did not fight. They walked and pushed, watching each other. Johnson was nervous at first, ducking or slipping more quickly than he needed to when Jeff moved a fist at him. At the bell, though, he tapped the Big Fellow playfully on the shoulder and flashed his golden smile at the crowd.

The second round—the third, then the fourth—The last big fight was on, but Jim Jeffries and Jack Johnson moved slowly in the hot ring, clinching, belting each other around the body. There might be forty-five rounds of it, and neither man would spend himself early. The crowd's noise grew angry, restless—

Dumb Julius ached suddenly for a flash of the old Jeffries fury—for one sweeping, irresistible charge by the man whose iron fists had flattened Old Fitz and smashed Tom Sharkey's ribs. The ache took him by the throat, so that he had to shake his head and look away for a moment.

Burke said, out of the side of his mouth: "It's all right!" Julius turned to the ring again.

The fourth ended. The fifth began slowly—

And in that slow fifth, Julius Brown saw the beginning of the cruel end—saw it, watched it, took it and went on watching. He saw Jeff swing his heavy left, saw him smash the Negro with it, high on the head—saw the sly astonishment on Johnson's face—

Jeffries crouched, pawing with his left—then suddenly snapped it in a short arc to the Negro's head. Johnson's head bobbed. The crowd yelled, exultant. But Jack Johnson had felt the Jeffries left, then, knew what it was and knew that it need not worry him. Johnson flicked his own left at the Big Fellow, clinched, went to the ropes with him and winked over his shoulder at the press row.

The mob rose, roaring—Jeff had hit him. The mob had seen Johnson fall into a clinch. The ringside had seen the Negro's wink, thought he was hurt and bluffing.

Dumb Julius knew better.

That was when Jim Corbett, crawling

the ring-ledge behind Jeff's corner, yelled his bitterest taunts at the big black man.

"Faker!" he yelled. "He'll kill you, Jack!" "Jack! Jack! You're yellow!" That was when the ringside roared a yell of triumph—men leaping up to shake fistfuls of currency, howling to bet two-to-one on Jeff, three-to-one—

Julius watched.

The fifth ended. Round six—

Jim Jeffries came out for the sixth, turning to laugh at something Berger said, settling confidently into his crouch.

Jack Johnson turned on the power. In that round, the Negro's smooth left hand flashed with a sudden deadliness—still smooth, it cracked viciously when the black man shot it in. Jeff stumbled and rocked back, jarred out of his crouch—and stumbled in again with his right eye swelling. Again Johnson's punch jarred him upright—and while the crowd's yell took a wild edge of panic, Johnson flashed that left again and again. Blood spattered from Jim Jeffries' nose. The Negro did not let up. At the bell, Jeff shook his head, uncertain of his corner. Jeff turned his face in an odd, stupid way, trying to see his corner with his left eye, because the right was blinded.

Julius kept his folded arms tight, holding himself against the pain—steeling himself against foolish hopes that ached in him suddenly—

The Big Fellow rushed like a wounded animal, at the gong for the seventh—Dumb Julius winced for him at the hurt of Johnson's left again, swift, repeated, relentless and maddening. Jeff reached the Negro's face, once, his own left flicking out a spatter of blood on the Negro's lips. Johnson laughed as he slipped away. Looking over at the ringside, Johnson stayed just out of reach of Jeffries' rush, pretending to ignore it. Then he turned suddenly, drove his left straight to the Big Fellow's mouth. Jeff rocked back, staggered. Johnson drove in his left again.

Jim Jeffries' face was smeared with red when the bell came—Julius could see him facing into the sun again, moving his lips, talking to his corner. The blood botched what he was saying, made his jabbering look senseless.

"You can still get some Jeffries money. Cover up!" Singer Burke's twisted voice was hoarse. But Julius turned, keeping the hurt to himself, smiling at Singer. He said: "I couldn't cover—my money's all on Jeff!"

"I got a little," Burke said.

"Keep it."

JEFF rallied again stubbornly in the next round, and the crowd rallied. The mob harried the ring with its uproar—there was desperation in it, but there was hope, too. Johnson clowned, circling the referee after every break and stepping in to belt both hands at the Big Fellow's body, laughing and yelling to Corbett when Jeff punched at him. But Big Jeff lashed out suddenly. He strained in a clinch, his great muscles etched in the fierce light. He tore his hands free, hammered fiercely at the Negro's midriff, drove him back. At the end of the round Jeff was leaning against the black man on the ropes, punching at him. Johnson capped the white man's elbows with his gloves, cutting down the leverage. But the crowd roared.

"By God!" Burke cried. "By God—"

Dumb Julius felt his throat tighten. He looked at the ring through a mist. Jim Jeffries was moving in, now, and Julius knew that he would keep on moving in.

That lump stayed where it was, and the mist remained. Through the ninth round and the tenth, Jeff swung at the black man with all his waning power—Johnson tied him up, pushed him away, smashed him again and again with the left, but Jeff would not back up.

Three times in the eleventh Jack Johnson landed his right uppercut, tearing the white man's head back, shoving his

face up into a wrenching glance at the white sky. He spattered the Big Fellow's face with a right-hand smash. He poured in the left, bobbing Jeff's head back, stopping him short again and again. Jeff crowded in. Late in the twelfth, still shuffling forward, Jim Jeffries lashed out both hands in his final desperation, charging in with a last fury—and this time the crowd cheered Jack Johnson. The Big Fellow swung his hands, but the black champion blocked and slipped and side-stepped with swift, intricate speed—

The mob's cheer came suddenly, with volition, wrenched out of it by the black man's magic.

Dumb Julius watched the Big Fellow stand in his corner at the end of the round—Jeff had both hands on the ropes, looked straight into the sun's glare, bulked as huge as he had on that night of the Ruhlin fight when Julius had seen a picture to remember. But this time Jeff sagged a little, spent. His eyes glinted blankly, and the blood blotched his face. His legs gave—he turned very wearily when they shoved the stool under him. He sat down, lolled his head back, and his great shoulders heaved as he wracked for breath.

Julius had another picture to remember, then—a picture seen through a mist, but warm with unyielding gallantry and the glamour of his legend.

The end was not far.

The cruel thirteenth round came and went—Jack Johnson held the Big Fellow's right shoulder, hammered his own right hand into Jeff's battered face—smashed him and hammered him and could not make him go down. He could not make him quit in the fourteenth—could not make him stop or break back. Both Jeff's eyes were puffed to glinting slits, now, and his legs were going. Johnson hit him with everything he had. Jeff's own huge, pawing left was pitiful. But Jeff kept shambling in.

Then the fifteenth—

The black man's finishing one-two only spread-eagled the Big Fellow on the east ropes. He spraddled there, staring helplessly into the sun, gasping and blinded, but not down.

The black fury smothered him with swift, cruel, short punches. He did not go down. Johnson stepped back suddenly, measured, hit—

Jim Jeffries fell, at last.

He went down stubbornly, even then. He clutched blindly at the ropes, trying to stay up. He fell between the top rope and the lower strand, but he went down only to his haunches. Resting on his right elbow, staring blankly through his red mask while the mob roared at him, he reached up his left hand, groped, caught the top rope and pulled himself grimly to his knees—

Tex Rickard waved the Negro away. Rickard counted, looking over his shoulder at the timekeeper.

Jeff pulled bitterly at the rope, lifted himself—

At "Nine" the Big Fellow stood up, caught himself with a numb stagger and

reeled toward the black man. Johnson pushed him away, worked him to the south side of the ring, measured him there.

"Stop it! Stop it!"

The mob was on its feet, the ringside a turmoil where the cops fought savagely against the mob's frantic surge.

DUMB JULIUS plunged swiftly into the welter and slipped through toward the ring platform. Singer Burke fought beside him—burly, savage, intent to get his boss clear of the stampede. Julius clutched at the press bench, deaf to curses, warding off half-punches and shoves—

Clinging to the ring-ledge, Julius Brown saw the towering Negro, his face a mask out of the jungle, now. He saw Jack Johnson's right shoulder jerk twice, viciously. He heard the short impact of the blows.

Jeff was down again—this time on his knees.

Rickard was counting—Julius counted with him. From the mob's maelstrom, Julius looked up into the ring, saw the Big Fellow get up again at "Nine." This time he lifted himself by the sheer strength of his legs, his arms dangling.

Jack Johnson hit him three times, flush on the jaw—a left, a right, another left.

Rickard got to "Seven"—

Corbett and Sam Berger and Bob Armstrong were in the ring, then, fighting their way into the roped square. Tex Rickard was waving Johnson away, pointing at him, signaling to the mob that Jack Johnson had won. And Jack Johnson was lifting his mitted fists above his head, looking down at the Big Fellow, trying to break out his golden smile.

But Dumb Julius Brown held fast to his post behind the Big Fellow's corner. Singer Burke stood with the cops, and the cops fought the mob away, but Dumb Julius held where he was. In the ringside riot Kid Murray fronted for his boss and Denver Jim Staley looked for Julius, caught sight of him—yelled at him. Dumb Julius did not see the men or hear the taunt. He held fast, watching the ring. He did not see Singer Burke dive at Kid Murray through the swirl of the mob, swinging both fists. The punch-drunk pug went down. As Denver Jim yelled, a policeman clipped at the Singer with his nightstick. But Burke only laughed crookedly, raging in the mob, while blood showed above his ear.

Dust rose into the heat. The mob tramped and shuffled, herding into the arena's bowl and leaving the bleachers gaunt. The ringside riot smouldered into a sullen milling, smothered by the sheer mass of the mob. The sun turned the rising dust into a sultry smoke.

Jim Jeffries got up, at length, testing his tired legs.

Dumb Julius waited.

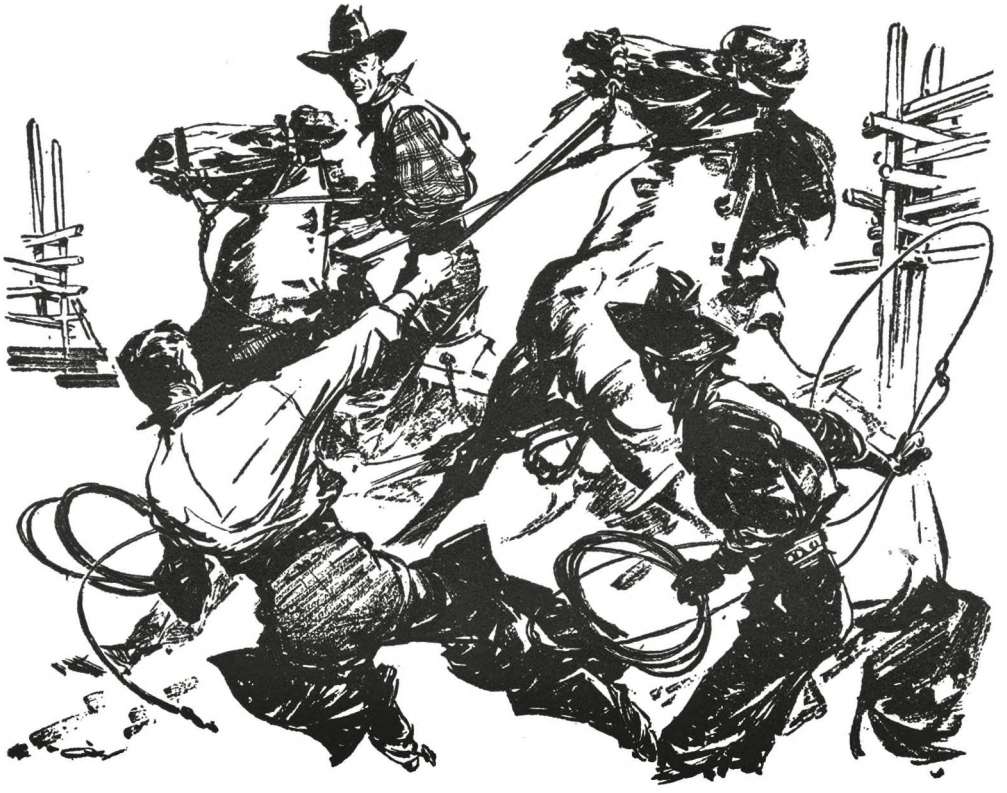
Jim Corbett was crying. Armstrong, the Negro, helped the Big Fellow with a hand under his armpit. Old Jeff crawled through, slowly, little helped by the shaken men who had backed him. He groped his great left hand downward for some support—

Jim Jeffries left hand stretched out, groping. The bandages were still around it, sweated and bloody.

Dumb Julius Brown reached up for the Big Fellow's hand.

He took Jeff's hand very securely and braced himself to steady the Big Fellow's faltering descent. It was right that he should do that, and he knew that it was right. It was what he had been waiting for. This was his victory, in the end—to give a strength of his own to the great fighting man who had spent himself in defending their legend, keeping its glamour untarnished—

Other men reached out to help. Julius Brown smiled at them, unashamed of the mist in his eyes. It was not the murk of sunlight through the ringside dust that made his face radiant.



THE ROGUE

by Henry Herbert Knibbs

THE September sun spread an amber haze over the Arizona uplands. Stirrup high, the mesa grass moved gently in the afternoon breeze. Keeping well within the strip of timber edging the mesa, Johnny Vail rode circumspectly. Both he and his mount, Step-and-Fetch-It, enjoyed the diversion of hunting wild turkey after the hard work of the fall roundup.

When the big birds, feeding on the gramma grass seed, had been warned by their sentinel and strung out single file, making for the farther timber, Step-and-Fetch-It would follow at an easy trot so as not to scatter them. When they took to the trees he would stand while his rider dismounted and skylined a bird in some tall spruce. Step-and-Fetch-It didn't mind the crang of the rifle.

But when a great bronze shape came hurtling down from branch to branch, he would snort and circle the dropped reins. He never bolted. Years ago he had learned that misbehavior never got him anywhere but into trouble.

His ears sharp, his muzzle quivering, Step-and-Fetch-It stopped.

"Would you believe it!" whispered Johnny Vail.

Tails to the breeze, a band of wild horses grazed across the open mesa, nipping hurriedly as though they had made a long run without grass. A sorrel, a roan, a gray or two stood out against the predominating brown of the herd. Between the grazing horses and the farther timber stood a silver gray stallion, his crest arched like a bending wave, his nostrils belled wide.

In the haze of amber sunlight the stallion seemed to grow and expand, becoming unreal, magnificent—a creature of legend like the ghost horse of the Navajos, in his sacred hogan, the blue sky. All the longing of a true horseman for the perfect steed, for that balance of grace, strength and symmetry that could be but seldom was, glowed in Johnny Vail's eyes. He recalled a verse he had read:

> For such would I barter my hope or rest
> in that far sung Otherwhere,
> For such would I filch the silver dust that
> floats in the starlit air,
> Melt it, mould it and draw it, till fashioned a slender rod,
> Then shaped round the horn of the anvil
> moon, that he should go silver shod.

While the stallion could neither see nor smell an enemy, a feeling that danger was near tingled along his back, whispered in his sharp cupped ears. The stallion stamped, swung round, facing the band of mares and colts. A long white scar showed on his neck as he flung up his head and whistled. Step-and-Fetch-It's answering neigh rang through the timberlands like a trumpet. A swirl of brown backs and flickering manes, and the wild horses swept across the mesa, disappearing in the amber and green shadows of the distant timber.

"Shucks!" muttered Johnny Vail. "You done spoiled the show. That was The Rogue."

Not a cow outfit in the Moonstone country but had at one time or another chased the wild stallion. Years ago, captured by some White Mountain cowboys, The Rogue had killed one of their top hands. The scar on the gray stallion's neck was the result of a shot fired while the outlaw was trampling the rider to death. In spite of rope and gun, The Rogue made his escape and had never been recaptured.

Step-and-Fetch-It fretted to take after the wild horses.

"You're a respectable cowhorse," said Johnny. "You don't mingle with those no-account broomtails."

The cowboy's gaze came back to where the wild horses had been grazing. Something was moving in the grass. As there was now no chance of getting turkey in that mesa, Johnny let the cowhorse have his head. Promptly Step-and-Fetch-It made for the middle of the mesa, stopped and cocked his ears as if saying:

"Just take a good look at that!"

In the tall grass lay a little colt, apparently not more than two months old. Something seemed wrong with its hind legs. Apparently it had been trampled when the band broke for the timber. Johnny dismounted to render first aid. The gray colt rolled a fighting eye.

"No bigger than a minute," laughed Johnny, "but mean enough for a lifetime."

Taking his rope, Johnny noosed and hogtied the flailing legs. If the colt was the get of the gray stallion it ought to develop into a fine saddle animal.

"What would you do in a case like this, Step? Put him out of his misery, or pack him down to the Moonstone and doctor him up?"

The old cowhorse did not seem especially interested. His attitude was that of a witness who does not care to talk. This son of The Rogue might be worth salvaging, but that was his rider's affair. Johnny neck-roped the colt and loosed its legs. Like a flash the little animal came up, tore round in a circle, tried its best to kick the cowboy's head off, and finally, entangled in the rope, fell in a heap.

"I kind of like you," said Johnny.

SEVERAL hours later Bleak Saunders, foreman of the Moonstone, sauntered over to the corrals where Johnny Vail and a strange gray colt were doing a sort of impromptu war dance.

"Thought you went huntin' wild turkey?"

Johnny hazed the colt into an empty corral and wiped the sweat from his face.

"Wild turkey? Say, if you don't think he's wild, just try to get into bed with him. And if you think he can't fly—"

He paused as he saw the foreman staring at a thin white streak on the colt's neck, a miniature of the scar carried by The Rogue. Zebra stripes, inherited from some remote ancestor of the horse, sometimes appeared on mules, burros and horses. But that any animal should inherit the scar of a bullet wound!

"It ain't in nature," declared the foreman. Johnny frowned like a pedagogue.

"Thinking of The Rogue? Well, this little fellow was in The Rogue's party, all right. Ran into 'em up in First Mesa. But that ain't exactly a scar; it's just a thin streak of white hair like an old rope burn."

Bleak Saunders' habitually skeptical eyes sought the sky.

"What you aim to do with him?"

"Do? Why, I'm going to doctor him up and see how he turns out. Did you think I was going to barbecue him?"

His head over the top rail of a corral near the stables, a handsome roan stallion stood staring at the lone, unfriendly little colt. The Moonstone foreman gestured.

"We got one stallion already, and he's plenty."

Johnny Vail nodded. "Heard one man was put out of business complete, during the chase, and that you got your leg broke when you tried to fork him."

"Tried!" snorted Bleak. "That there Pericles throwed away every hand that ever put a leg over him, except the Old Man. And he wore out more ropes and rolled more saddles than the whole Moonstone cavvy put together before he came to his milk. At that, Pericles never was a man-killer. And he ain't mean. But that colt there, he's The Rogue all over again, young as he is."

The cheerfully unabashed Johnny grinned.

"I've named him The Rogue already."

Johnny displayed his skinned knuckles and a lump on his jaw where the colt had kicked him.

"He's interesting, like dynamite. I kind of like him."

"I ain't interferin' in nobody's love affairs," said Bleak. They walked toward the bunk house. "All I got to say is, you done roped yourself a bunch of trouble."

Johnny Vail preferred his trouble in bunches rather than when it came scattering. And he had plenty in feeding the foundling. When the young Rogue had completely recovered from his lameness and was able to shift for himself, he was turned into the big South pasture. In so far as the other horses were concerned he was an outcast. From the very beginning he was mean.

Walking John, Gee Whiz, Sandy, Step-and-Fetch-It and the rest of the Moonstone horses, with the exception of the old pensioner Piecrust, had it in for him. For some reason best known to horses, old Piecrust took The Rogue's part. They became companions, if not friends.

When a two-year-old, The Rogue showed promise to becoming all that his sire had been, strong, handsome, quick, and so vicious as to be uttterly untamable. Once, as Bleak Saunders and Johnny were riding the south line, the foreman gestured toward a streak of manes and tails tearing across the pasture.

"There's your pet—chasin' the legs off our good mounts, instead of runnin' with a bunch of mares. He's of the Steeldust breed, and he'd get some likely colts, but I'm telling you if he was mine he'd be a gelding, right now."

Johnny shook his head. "He's going to stay like he was made. If I can't break him and ride him like he is, it's my funeral."

"I'll admire to attend the ceremony," said Bleak.

As a three-year-old The Rogue was a clear silver gray, stood nearly fifteen hands, with the depth of shoulder and

barrel of a stayer. A fine head, with a muzzle like an Arab, small ears, eyes full and wide apart, showed high ancestry somewhere in his lineage. His action was spirited, suggesting restrained power, his ordinary manner that of any young stallion.

Only when overtaken by one of his wild spells did his eye become a blaze of fury ringed by white. That anything so beautiful could be so deliberately vicious puzzled Johnny Vail. Aside from old Piecrust there was not a gelding on the ranch that did not run when The Rogue charged.

As for Pericles, he and the young gray stallion had never met. There was much speculation among the hands as to what would happen should The Rogue and the roan stallion come together. Secretly some of the hands hoped they would. There was little chance of it. Pericles, Peter Annersley's top horse, had his own corral and enjoyed complete isolation in his own small pasture.

FULL-BLOODED, young and strong, The Rogue found no natural outlet for his abundant energy. Hazing the other horses was merely exercise. Often the young stallion would stand motionless near the south line, the breeze whipping his mane, his fine nostrils wide, staring up at the distant blue of the high country. He knew it was his native range, and longed to run with his kind.

Always near, the old pensioner Piecrust would graze stiffly from spot to spot, apparently paying no attention to the gray stallion. But when The Rogue, longing for freedom, would whirl like a panther and dash off across the pasture, Piecrust would stare after him a moment, then amble in the same direction like some ancient, rheumatic nurse trying to keep track of a wayward youngster.

Never was Peter Annersley's top horse Pericles a fence-jumper. Never had he outgrown his fear of barbed wire. While seemingly content with his own range, often he would stand at the gate between the two pastures watching the other horses. Happening by one day, Vinegaroon noted that the gate was sagging. The barbed-wire loop, half rusted through, was broken.

Vinegaroon repaired the damage temporarily with a loop of tie rope, intending to return and make a more substantial job of it. Pericles had never touched the wire loop, but discovering the soft rope, he became interested. He gnawed and tugged at it in a coltish fashion. Finally he worked the rope loose and the gate fell with a swish.

It had been years since the roan stallion had ranged the big south pasture with his old companions. Any horse, discovering a pasture gate down, will go through the gateway, because the longing for absolute freedom never quite dies. As the feel of the old days came back to him, Pericles approached the down gate, cautiously stepped over it and stood gazing at the distant horses grazing in the afternoon sunlight. His shrill neigh brought their heads up. But they soon took to grazing again.

To The Rogue, however, the call was a challenge. Swinging round, he started toward the north fence at a high trot, old Piecrust following at a stiff, shoulder-jarring lope. When within a short hundred yards of Pericles, The Rogue swerved and shot off at a diagonal, evidently expecting the roan stallion to take after him. Piecrust, who had virtually adopted Pericles when the roan was a colt, came straight on. His Chippendale legs seemed to grow limber, his eye livelier as he strutted up to Pericles. They touched noses. Piecrust whinnied softly. But Pericles' attention was fixed on the strange gray stallion who was evidently maneuvering to get behind him.

For one stallion to rush at another like an avalanche is not uncommon. Again, herd leaders will approach one another

like fighting dogs, stiff-legged, wary, each waiting for the other to disclose his tactics. Evidently expecting Pericles to take to his heels, The Rogue came up with plenty of knee action, his head high, his mane flaunting like a banner.

But Pericles was no gelding to be hazed here and there. The Rogue stopped, snorted. The roan stallion's immobility puzzled him. Pericles' shoulder muscles quivered and his eye widened, but he made no attempt to begin hostilities. With the best intentions in the world, old Piecrust precipitated matters.

Trotting stiffly to The Rogue, he addressed him with a friendly whinny, like an old mare warning her colt to behave himself. A curve of gray light, the young stallion whirled and kicked. Too stiff to get out of the way, Piecrust went down in a heap.

Pericles saw his chance. The Rogue's heels had hardly touched the ground when Pericles charged.

Ears flattened, the young gray stallion met the charge. His head swung like a snake as he struck, missing Pericles' neck by a mere inch or so. His charge carrying him past the gray, Pericles whirled to meet a second attack. They came together with a grunt, rearing and flailing at each other with stiff forelegs.

The Rogue swung away, a streak of red staining his shoulder. Pericles was shod, The Rogue barefoot. The shod horse, however, had no other advantage. He could cut deeper with a shod hoof, yet the unshod horse could handle his feet quicker. Employing an old trick, Pericles turned and ran as if afraid of his enemy. The Rogue took after him like a bullet. With forelegs straight and haunches low, Pericles set himself up. Whirling as The Rogue went past, he drove both hind feet into his ribs.

Staggered by the shock, The Rogue caught himself barely in time to dodge the wide jaws that closed with a snap, tearing away part of his mane.

Again the stallions drew apart, Pericles hot and wary, The Rogue hot and reckless.

While he had the advantage of youth and was in splendid condition, backed by his heritage of viciousness and wild courage, it was The Rogue's first battle. Hitherto, when a horse ran from him, he considered him whipped. Yet in spite of his recent experience, when Pericles again turned and ran, The Rogue took after him, leaving, however, a margin of safety in case the roan stallion whirled suddenly.

Aware of the intervening space, Pericles again set himself up, came round like a flash and rushed straight at the oncoming gray. Too late to swerve or stop, The Rogue reared, battering with his forefeet. The sheer weight of Pericles' rush swept the gray stallion off his precarious balance and he crashed down. As The Rogue struggled to his feet Pericles' teeth sunk in his neck. Shoulder to shoulder they struggled, The Rogue snapping at Pericles' breast muscles.

Pericles reared and bore the young stallion to his knees. Quick and hardy, The Rogue broke free and was up and back at Pericles, blind mad and raging like a whirlwind. Wide-jawed, Pericles bluffed for The Rogue's neck. As the gray stallion dodged, Pericles' head swung down and his jaws closed on The Rogue's foreleg.

Had Pericles caught him below the knee instead of high above it, the gray stallion might have been crippled for life. As it was, he broke away again, a deep cut in the heavy muscles of his forearm. So great was his fury, so wild his returning charge, that Pericles was swept off his feet.

Slashing at the roan stallion's belly as he rolled, The Rogue was met with a shod hoof that jarred him from muzzle to tail. Up again, Pericles reared and struck, The Rogue meeting him blow for blow. Hoofs thudded on shoulder, neck and head. Winded, they drew apart.

Yet there could be no truce. One or the other would either run from the fight, or drop with a broken leg or slashed neck vein.

Having suffered the not unusual fate of the peacemaker, old Piecrust promptly removed himself from the scene of battle. Piecrust's long, curved teeth made chewing so difficult that it took him a long time to get a full meal. Nip by nip he worked his way along the north fence of the pasture, stopping, when he beheld the down gate, with the expression of an old gentleman who has mislaid his spectacles.

Piecrust knew gates, knew how to circumvent them when they lay twisted in treacherous loops of barbed wire. With great circumspection he stilted safely over the barbed strands. Here was new pasture, plenty of grass, and a water trough where the pasture adjoined the stables! Not silent upon a peak in Darien, Piecrust cocked his tail, raised his old head and started at what seemed to him a brisk trot of exploration. Incidentally, he said *Whoosh!*

Climbing down from oiling the windmill, Vinegaroon heard the *whoosh,* saw Piecrust ranging Pericles' private domain. And no Pericles in sight. Catching up a horse, Vinegaroon was saddling him when Peter Annersley came out of the ranch house.

"I reckon," stammered the cowboy, "that Pericles is loose."

Although past fifty, heavy set and deliberate in his movements, Peter Annersley had a mount saddled and got going before Vinegaroon had opened the yard gate. Surmising what had happened, and with the gray stallion in mind, Peter rode at a lope, building a loop as he went. Somehow Pericles had worked the rope off the north pasture gate. Now he and the wild gray stallion were fighting, a whirlwind of hoofs and flashing teeth.

Peter Annersley rode straight for the battling stallions, his mount holding steadily until within a few yards of them, when he swerved as Peter's loop swept out. The instant it touched Pericles' neck, the roan stallion swung round and came to the rope. The Rogue immediately began to run. The fight was over. Yet Vinegaroon, swinging a loop wide enough to snare a boxcar, foolishly made his throw.

For the first time in his life The Rogue felt the bite of the noose. Fighting back, the young stallion suddenly lunged forward and rushed at Vinegaroon's mount. Before the cowboy's horse could turn, The Rogue was into him. The cowhorse crashed down, his belly flashed in the sun, and The Rogue was flying down the pasture, the rope snaking at his heels.

Peter Annersley stepped down. Vinegaroon tried to rise, but sank back with a groan. His leg was broken above the knee.

More trouble followed in The Rogue's wake. There was no ranch telephone on the Moonstone. Johnny Vail was sent to fetch the doctor. On the way to town the team ran away and Johnny Vail was thrown out. The runaway team was caught by a rancher who eventually discovered Johnny unconscious beside the road, and took him to the railroad hospital in Redbank.

> There was never a horse that can't be rode
> And never a man that can't be throwed—

The song goes that way. So do horses and men. Snow was sparkling on the far peaks of the Blue Range the November morning when Buck, and Bill Wade, Shorty White, Tonto Charley and the Moonstone foreman, looking like a group of conspirators, rode slowly down the big south pasture. Each man wore heavy chaps. Bleak Saunders carried a spare rope.

Characteristically, the Moonstone hands said nothing to each other about their enterprise, which, had Johnny Vail been at the ranch instead of at the Redbank hospital, would never have been

attempted. Tonto Charley alone struck the keynote of their deviltry.

"There was never a horse—" he hummed.

Buck grinned. "And never a man—"

The Moonstone boys were out to ride The Rogue. In a manner of speaking The Rogue belonged to Johnny Vail. In another manner of speaking The Rogue didn't belong to anybody, and the consensus was that he never would. This made the prospective experiment all the more interesting.

The foreman's presence lent the affair a sort of official standing. Since the two stallions had battled, Bleak, who was secretly fond of Pericles, had taken a virulent dislike to The Rogue.

"He's a man killer by birth, and a rattlesnake by choice," was the mildest thing Bleak had ever said about him.

Although intervening horses were scattered here and there, long before the riders were near enough to spread out and corner him the gray stallion had streaked down the east line fence. Old Piecrust, as usual, followed at a stiff-legged lope.

The Moonstone boys, who had been riding east by south, separated. Buck, who had the fastest horse, swung back and rode north by west. Bleak and Tonto Charley kept on toward the east line, in case The Rogue broke back. Bill Wade and Shorty White fanned out, riding up the middle of the pasture.

Carrying no weight, and with all the endurance of the Steeldust breed, The Rogue could have kept the Moonstone hands roping fresh mounts and following him all day. Consequently they had set a trap. Tail up, and his stride long, smooth and swift, the gray stallion soon outdistanced his pursuers, who, apparently, were poking along, not directly after him, but spread fanwise and coming in his direction.

As he neared the north fence, his wild eyes slanting back, The Rogue swerved and ran parallel to the fence until, topping a low rise, he saw directly west of him, a tiny figure, horse and rider motionless. He dropped, snorted, his quick ears working back and forth. Whirling, he headed back toward the east.

Far down the fence two horsemen were moving along in a leisurely fashion. The Rogue whirled and once more struck west. The motionless figure was still there. Again stopping, The Rogue stared toward the figures coming up the middle of the pasture.

With a shrill whistle he broke into a run, evidently intending to charge between the fence and the lone figure on the west. The gray stallion had never been chased, knew nothing of the tactics of mounted men. Fear began to tingle along his back, fear that no direct attack could have awakened.

Slowly the five horsemen converged toward him. Still running west, The Rogue stopped as Buck waved his slicker. It was both a challenge to the stallion and a signal to the rest of the outfit. The Rogue had come opposite the gate of the north pasture, and purposely the gate had been left open.

Buck was now moving forward, the yellow slicker flaunting and crackling. Bleak and Tonto Charley were coming up at a lope. Shorty White and his partner began drawing together. For a tense instant the young gray stallion faced south, as though about to charge at the converging line and break through.

Highly excited, Piecrust cut diagonally across the pasture toward The Rogue. Piecrust paid himself the compliment of imagining that the Moonstone hands were after him. His old eyes wide and rolling, he came on at a long lope. Strangely enough, the north pasture gate was again open. Wheezing like a leaky locomotive cylinder, Piecrust dashed through the open gateway. With a snort The Rogue turned and followed.

In the north pasture, but a few acres in extent, the hands again and again tried to force the gray stallion into the corral near the stables. The Rogue's

fear had become rage. It took the best in horse and rider to keep after him when he ran, and to keep out of his way when he charged. Again crowding The Rogue toward the corral, Bleak Saunders noosed him, Buck rode in and heeled him. As the captive reared and fought, Bill Wade snared his forefeet.

Dragged into the corral, The Rogue lay breathing heavily, his silver coat splotched with sweat, the rims of his eyes showing red. In that fearsome enclosure, helpless, half-choked to death, his rage burned in a slow flame. When the ropes were slacked on neck and legs, he got to his feet and was drawn up short to the snubbing post. He took the manhandling sullenly, offering no retaliation.

The Moonstone hands were not deceived. Eared down, saddled, still the gray stallion did no more than grunt and roll his bloodshot eyes. But when Buck, riding close to shake his loop loose, came within range of The Rogue's heels, the stallion lashed out. Buck's pony, Pancho, was led from the corral, a foreleg dangling like a wet rope. The game little cow pony had done his last work.

Thus far, only the foreman had taken The Rogue seriously enough to hate him. But now, as Pancho hobbled out of the corral with a broken foreleg, the hands settled down to make a fight with the stallion.

AS Tonto Charley mounted and raked him from shoulder to flank, The Rogue went into the air, obviously determined to kill the man who was riding him.

Crashing blindly into the side of the corral, man and horse went down in a swirl of dust. When The Rogue regained his feet, Tonto Charley still in the saddle, the stallion again went into the air in a series of stiff-legged jumps that brought a thin trickle of red to Tonto Charley's mouth.

Bleak Saunders ran from the corral to the bunk house. When he returned it was with belt and holster. A few seconds later The Rogue crashed down, rolled his rider, and lunging to his feet, reared to trample him to death. Before any of the hands could swing a rope, Bleak had fired.

Bucking as he ran, The Rogue went out of the corral. The saddle slipped over his haunches. He launched a kick that sent it flopping like a wounded buzzard.

Carried to the water trough, Tonto Charley was revived, his tribute to the gray stallion a broken collar bone and two fractured ribs. Missing The Rogue by inches, Bleak's shot had caromed off the pump-rod of the windmill at a long diagonal, drilled a window pane and shattered the kitchen looking-glass.

Bleak was for taking his Winchester and putting an end to The Rogue's career. Tonto Charley, groaning in his bunk, argued against such a proceeding.

"Hell, I been busted worse than this by a little horse that wouldn't say sugar if he had a mouthful of it. Leave the gray alone. I reckon he's earned his right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

"It ain't The Rogue's fault he's made like he is," blurted Vinegaroon. "Wouldn't it be just as easy to turn him loose and tell Johnny he broke out of pasture himself instead of killing him?"

"You just learn to ride your crutches," growled Bleak.

Vinegaroon's pop eyes bulged.

"I'll be through ridin' 'em a darned sight sooner than you were when Pericles busted you up."

Bill Wade winked at Shorty. Sides were taken for and against the gray stallion. Fortunately the argument, which threatened to result in a pitched battle, was interrupted by the arrival of Peter Annersley and his wife, back from town.

Little by little the story of the latest mishap was dragged from the reluctant cowboys. Peter Annersley made no com-

ment. But he did contrive a mental recapitulation. Vinegaroon on crutches, Johnny Vail barely convalescent, Tonto Charley crippled, the cowpony Pancho destroyed because of a broken leg, and Pericles still bearing the unhealed marks of his battle with The Rogue.

To put the final polish on this series of misfortunes, Ma Annersley's old walnut-framed mirror, dear to her heart, now resembled nothing so much as the fist of Jove dispensing thunderbolts. A broken mirror, so it was said, meant seven years' bad luck. Peter was not especially superstitious, yet he was obliged to admit that bad luck followed The Rogue like a colt following a mother who is trying to wean him.

Shoulders, ribs and flanks roweled red, his nose ridged by the hackamore, a patch of skin off his head, and a weal round his neck where the rope had seared him, The Rogue sulked in the southeast corner of the pasture. The son of The Rogue had become, in a few brief hours, that most dangerous of broncos, a sullen fighter.

From that day The Rogue went warily, wasting no time molesting the other horses, shunning even the companionship of old Piecrust who, after one or two attempts to be friendly, limped off with a hoof-marked haunch, leaving the young gray stallion to range and graze alone.

Only at the water hole, where he could not always evade them, did The Rogue ever consort, even briefly, with his kind. He was seldom seen except when someone happened to ride the south end of the big pasture. Day after day the gray stallion would range slowly up and down the long miles of fence, fearful of the wire, yet holding as close to it as he dared, his gaze continually seeking the high country.

At the first sign of an approaching horseman he would be away, not, as heretofore, with a snort and a great flurry of going, but swiftly, stealthily dodging among the junipers, deliberately hiding in some dense thicket as a deer will hide and watch its pursuers.

Already he had earned the name of outlaw. Refusing to serve and bend to man's standards, he ran true to his heritage. He was all that horses are before they know bit or collar. There was vigor and fire in his every motion, his gait, the toss of his head. Even his tense immobility was graceful in its unconscious perfection. No domestic horse, no matter how spirited, is half so magnificent as a wild stallion.

As good a hand with the salty ones as any of the Moonstone riders, with the exception of Peter Annersley, who had tamed the young stallion Pericles, Johnny refused to believe that The Rogue could not be handled. Pericles, argued Johnny, had been just as wild when captured. Now Pericles was Peter's chosen mount, handy, biddable, always to be relied on. He could be led about with a piece of string, and could be talked into doing almost anything but carrying a strange rider. And that was what Johnny Vail liked about Pericles. He was a one-man horse. Of such a horse Johnny Vail had dreamed.

Throughout that winter The Rogue ranged the big pasture and in spite of lean grazing, took on weight and muscle. The Moonstone hands frequently held high argument, Tonto Charley, Bill Wade and Vinegaroon siding with Johnny Vail in his belief that, while The Rogue was a bad actor, he could be made to kneel and say his prayers by the right man. Buck, Shorty White and the foreman held that nothing but a .45 between the eyes would ever tame the gray stallion.

Once that winter the hands approached Peter Annersley on the subject. Peter smiled and, turning to Johnny Vail, said:

"He's your horse."

Stubbornly, Johnny refused to take this as a hint. Through argument, through his isolation, and because of his potentialities as a trouble-maker, The Rogue had become to Johnny an un-

certain quantity like dynamite, and consequently interesting to experiment with. More than that, he had become a sort of romantic ideal, like some legend horse of ancient history.

Following the spring round-up Johnny quietly laid his plans. South of the Moonstone, between the line fence and the high country, stood an old stake corral, solidly built by Mormon settlers and still sound and serviceable. Between the line and the old corral, a matter of some four or five miles, the country was rough, the trail little better than a way through.

Johnny reasoned that the gray stallion would have less edge by the time he had been hazed up to the corral. The big job was to get him there.

To his surprise, every hand, including the pessimistic foreman, offered to help. They would make a picnic of it, pack along some food and bedding and spend the night in the hills. This isolated location was made necessary because Ma Annersley flatly refused to allow Johnny to be killed, as she put it, on the home ranch, secretly hoping that The Rogue would escape.

ONE morning early in July the Moonstone hands saddled up and rode into the big south pasture. The Rogue watched them coming across the open country west of the junipers where he was hiding. Presently one of the riders opened the gate in the south line fence, then disappeared. There were five horsemen still in sight, all riding easily toward the south end.

A few minutes later another man and his mount disappeared. Nervously the gray stallion watched the remaining four, still not near enough to his hiding place to start him running. As the riders passed a juniper thicket another horseman disappeared. The Rogue now saw but three coming in his direction.

Instinct told him that the unseen men were still in the pasture, and that the entire outfit was after him. Puzzled, not knowing which way to run, he remained motionless, tense, his ears rigid, his nostrils wide. Vainly he endeavored to catch a taint in the windless air. Now he could see but one rider among the junipers.

This rider, serveral hundred yards north of The Rogue's position, kept on to the east fence, where he also disappeared. From down the south line near the gateway came a long halloo. Behind The Rogue and outside the east fence Tonto Charley yipped like a coyote. The Rogue jumped and began to run. Dodging juniper clumps, and still too close to the south fence to feel safe, he swung suddenly toward the north.

From behind a thicket emerged a horse and rider. The Rogue heard the whistle of the rope and swung west again. Making another attempt to head north, he was surprised by the appearance of still another horseman with rope up and going. The gray stallion whirled and dashed down along the south line fence. Near the open gate Johnny Vail sat his horse, waiting.

Taking a long diagonal toward the gateway, The Rogue charged through. As his forefeet hit the ground just beyond the gateway, something writhed like a snake, leaped up and coiled about his forelegs. So great was his speed that The Rogue struck on his head and turned completely over. Stunned, he lay motionless. Johnny Vail thought the stallion had broken his neck.

Pouring down the pasture in long brown streaks came the rest of the Moonstone hands, each trailing a loop. Before the gray stallion recovered they had three ropes on him. Dazed, he lunged to his feet. The shock of the fall had taken all the fight out of him. With the big-boned, heavy cow-horse, Walking John, on one side, and Step-and-Fetch-It on the other—Johnny Vail riding ahead with a slack rope on The Rogue's neck

and the rest of the outfit following—the stallion was hazed up the ragged trail, stumbling like a horse that has gone blind.

"I've seen a hoolihan like that tame a bad one when nothing else would work," declared Vinegaroon.

No one commented further save Bleak Saunders, who gazed for a moment at the gray stallion, then spat viciously at a rock. Johnny Vail turned and glanced back to see what the boys were laughing at.

SEVEN men, each armed with the weapon a wild horse dreads most, the rope, and their mounts, stout, quick and clever at their work, pitting their wariness, activity, and combined weight of numbers against the prowess of one lone gray broomtail from the hills! Even in his half-stupefied condition The Rogue knew that every man and every mount was his enemy; not an enemy that would battle openly with him as one stallion with another, but one which would employ weapons which he could not understand, means which he could not foresee.

Nor could The Rogue know their intent. He was aware only that he was captive, that his strength and will to fight seemed to have left him. As he slowly recovered from the terrific fall, a certain cunning warned him to make no resistance here on the trail, nor wear himself out until the ropes, which gave or tightened as he lagged or spurted, were loosed from his neck.

As the outfit drew near the tree-girdled flat on which stood the corral, Bleak and Tonto Charley each built a loop and rode close, ready to heel The Rogue should he show fight. Behind trailed Vinegaroon and Shorty White, leading the pack horses. Opposite the entrance to the old corral, the stakes of which were the size of small logs, The Rogue stopped.

Bleak swung his loop and struck him on the rump. As the gray stallion jumped forward, Tonto Charley beat him with his rope to keep him going. In three jumps The Rogue was in the corral, wide eyed and trembling. The hands didn't allow him an inch of slack as they fought him up to the snubbing post, threw and hogtied him.

For an hour he lay there, only occasionally lifting his head and heaving to break the ropes that bit into his legs and neck. Slowly his wits returned and fresh strength pulsed through his veins. In spite of the fall and the rough handling he was anything but whipped.

"There was never a horse—" hummed Johnny Vail as he packed his saddle into the corral.

Johnny wore heavy chaps, a wide belt, soft, short gloves. He saw to it that his blue rowdy was buttoned. Once, when riding a salty one, Johnny's rowdy had caught on the saddle-horn with disastrous results. This journey Johnny was taking no unnecessary chances.

The cinch was worked under The Rogue as he lay, the saddle clamped down, and the hackamore, with its choking balls that press into a horse's nostrils and shut off his wind, was slipped over his head. As Johnny curled a cigarette, Tonto Charley noted that his hand was as steady as his own. And Johnny was smiling.

"I'll uncock him for you," volunteered Tonto.

Johnny shook his head.

"All I want is to keep him right here in the corral during the election. If he gets out and into the timber, I'm like to lose my vote."

Bleak Saunders nodded.

"You sure will, if you happen to be on him. He'll just naturally spread you all over a tree."

The foreman drew the short rifle from its scabbard.

The smile went out of Johnny's eyes.

"Listen, Bleak. Coming or going, this little stallion is my horse. If he gets by

you fellas, and I ain't in the saddle, let him go. If I figured he ought to be killed, I'm the one to do the killing."

It was mid-afternoon when The Rogue was corraled. Now the thin chill that in the high country anticipates the setting sun was creeping into the air. At this scarcely perceptible change the captive stallion's nostrils belled wide. He breathed deep. Night would soon close down. In the transition between dusk and dark wild horses grow restless. Even when night was settled, a wild horse herd often will mill nervously, fearful of a possible danger concealed by darkness. Only when the morning sun strikes clear and warm do they really drowse and rest.

The old, primordial instinct to flee from the unknown thrilled through the gray stallion. His captors had let him lie for an hour to cool his fighting edge, a method that is often effective. If anything, the interval had refreshed The Rogue. When Johnny Vail straddled him, Bleak and Tonto shook their ropes loose and the stallion lunged up. For a second or two he stood motionless, his ears sharpened toward the corral entrance.

Sitting deep in the saddle, Johnny moved his legs back and forth alternately, keeping them in motion that he might catch his balance when the stallion made his first jump. Johnny did not use the spurs. Bleak, disgust in his tone, shouted:

"Rake him!"

Johnny laughed. At the sound of his voice The Rogue jumped straight for the group at the corral entrance. A rope hissed out and stung him across the forelegs. He whirled back and went into the air. Johnny went to work with the rowels. Pitching straight, high and hard, The Rogue hit the ground like a trip-hammer. Johnny took the punishment with a grin, yet the color began to leave his face.

Unable to shake his rider loose, the stallion went for the side of the corral to crush him. Johnny's leg curled up over the cantle as the stallion crashed into the timbers. In the rebound Johnny caught the stirrup just in time to sit out a series of short, ugly plunges that took The Rogue to the opposite side of the enclosure, where he again went into the timbers. Again Johnny's leg curled up and out of danger.

Whirling, The Rogue made straight for the snubbing post, struck it with his shoulder and fell. Before he could roll, Johnny took the hackamore up short. His wind shut off by the choking balls, The Rogue struggled to regain his feet. He came up with a rush. The hackamore went just slack enough to allow him to breathe.

Though dazed for the moment, The Rogue continued pitching, going high, lashing out with his hind legs as his forefeet hit the ground, yet he could not shake that supple, clinging weight from his back. Swinging his head, he snapped viciously at his rider's legs as he went into the air again.

The Moonstone boys held their breath. Never had they seen a bronco pitch so viciously and yet so gracefully. Grudgingly they admitted that if his luck held Johnny would have a real horse. It was a long drawn "if". When not coming down with legs stiff and back arched, The Rogue was one long, continuously changing curve of silver gray. His coat was beginning to darken with sweat. He thrust his head between his feet.

Before he went into the air, Johnny again took a stiffer hold on the hackamore, choking the stallion down. He fell, Johnny ready to come up with him. Again on his feet, The Rogue stood for a second, then with a lift like a released spring he went over backward.

Out of the saddle before The Rogue was straight up, Johnny caught the horn and was astride again when the stallion scrambled to his feet. The boys cheered.

"What did I tell you!" cried Tonto.

"Nothin'," snorted Bleak. "Look out!"

The Rogue was into them like a gray flash. Two ponies went down. Tonto Charley swung his rope, Buck swung his. Their loops came together in a tangle, and The Rogue dashed through. With wild vigor that not even the choking balls could tame, he made for the timber in long jumps that covered plenty of ground as he pitched. Johnny was still in the saddle when horse and rider disappeared among the giant spruce.

IN the immediate forest were no branches low enough to brush Johnny from the saddle. Blind mad, The Rogue charged toward a huge tree. Johnny tried to pull him aside, but the gray stallion crashed into the tree trunk and went down in a heap. Unable to rid himself of his rider, he had tried to kill himself.

Stripping off the saddle and the hackamore, Johnny stood looking down at the stunned and motionless animal. The Rogue had put up a gallant battle. A lump rose in Johnny's throat.

Stooping, Johnny patted The Rogue's head in farewell. The stallion quivered, raised in its forelegs. Johnny jumped back. The Rogue heaved himself up. He was dazed, yet the fire of battle still glowed dully in his eye. Not knowing what he might do, Johnny swung the hackamore.

As it smacked on The Rogue's flank, he launched a vicious kick at the cowboy, squealed a last defiance, and leaping into a run, vanished in the dusky shadows of the timberlands.

Oblivious to the distant halloos of his companions, the Moonstone cowboy stood staring after him. Suddenly it came to Johnny Vail that there was something much bigger than conquering The Rogue. Should an animal that so hated mastery be tortured, choked and battered into a spiritless thing, or killed in the attempt to master him? What glory could there be in that, what satisfaction?

Now he would be ranging the high country, free and searching for his kind. Johnny could picture him finding them, running with the mares, possibly battling with his sire for mastery of the herd. He would grow old. A younger stallion would supplant him. But only age would conquer him. And that was as it should be. Johny picked up his saddle and started toward camp.

THE night fire warm on their faces, the wind down, the Moonstone boys sat smoking and talking while Vinegaroon washed up the dishes. Star points of white fire sparkled in the chill mountain air. The talk ran on horses, people, and places both far and near, yet Johnny Vail had said nothing about the gray stallion.

The outfit had no idea what had happened. The Rogue was gone, and Johnny had returned to camp with saddle and hackamore. Was the gray stallion lying dead in some hollow, or was he ranging the hills and high mesas? Thus the boys speculated, yet asked no questions.

Back in the timber an owl hooted, the call mellowed to music by distance. A spark from the fire lighted Buck's hand. He brushed it off with a humorous expletive. Bleak Saunders rose and was stalking toward his blankets when a far, shrill neigh sounded across the forested hills.

"Got it!" said Johnny. The brown, firelit faces grew alert.

"Got what?" said Tonto Charley.

"The answer you all been waiting for," laughed Johnny.

"Too wicked to keep, too noble to kill,
And so,
I turned him loose. He's over the hill,
I let him go."

And that was all Johnny Vail ever said about the wild gray stallion he had longed to gentle and make his companion and his friend.

THE SCORPION

by Colonel George B. Rodney

CHAPTER I

LONG-TWELVE PORTON

A FINE drizzle of rain across Delaware Bay drove Tom Swayne to the "Jolly Pilots" tavern for supper. He had moored his schooner *Ibis* to the Lewes dock behind the breakwater and sent his crew ashore and he sought supper with no thought of trouble. The wide expanse of the bay was whipped by rain, the cold wind was penetrating as he turned up the collar of his coat and hurried along the deserted street. From time to time a man called to him from a hastily opened door. Every one in Lewes knew Tom Swayne as most of lower Delaware knew old Cyrus Swayne, his father.

Old Cyrus had been with Barney in the old *Hyder Ali* when he took the British frigate *General Monk* and for his valor had been offered a commission in the new navy. But old Cyrus had no time for romance; he had a family to provide for. He bought the bark *Catalina* from the Spanish government, renamed her *Catherine* for his wife and in ten years amassed a decent fortune. Then, his wife dying, old Cyrus took to the sea again and took Tom with him. He watched the boy grow from lob-lolly boy to seaman, through bo's-'n to mate. He had watched him bring the *Catherine* through a blow off the Falkland Islands when a pampero almost laid her on her beams' ends and he gave him his final polish off Hatteras.

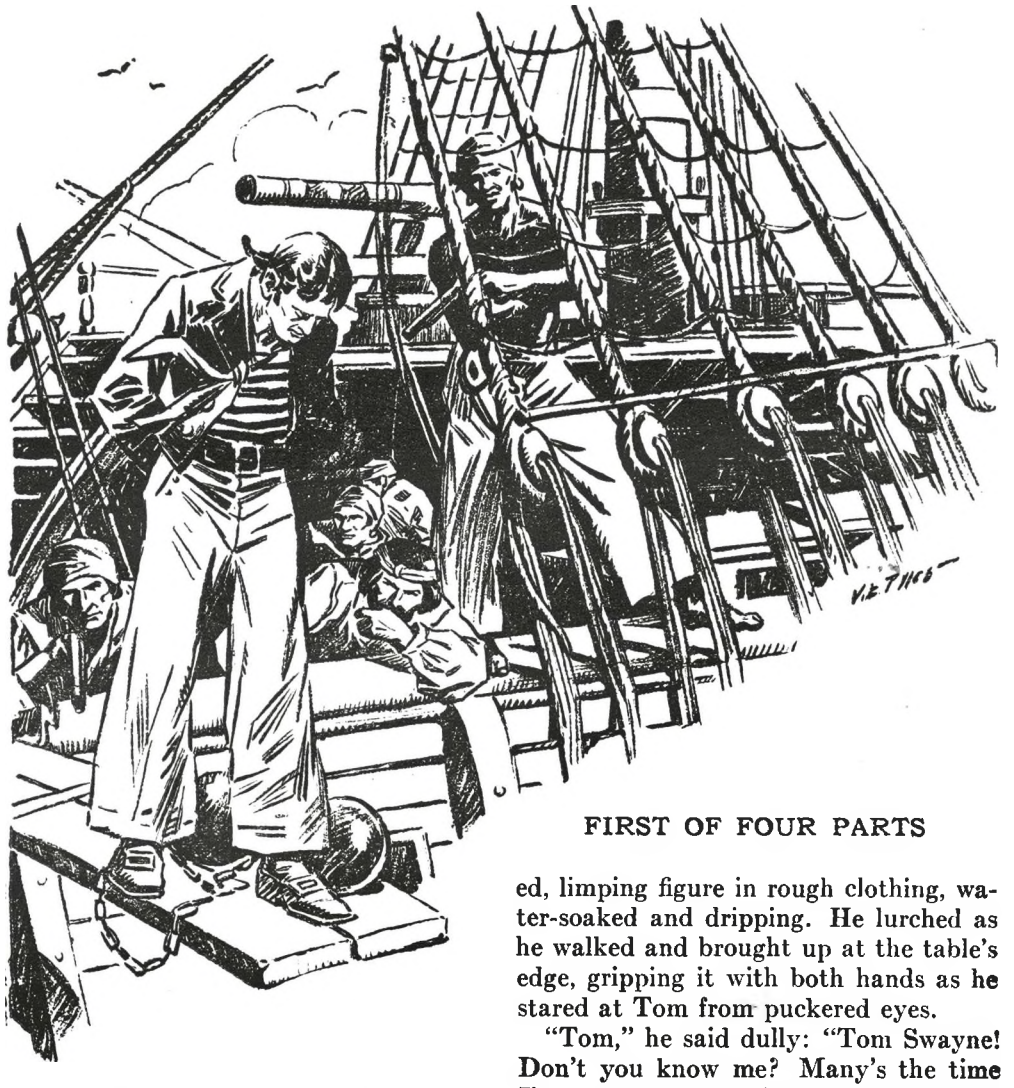
"The Grand Banks can't do better," said Cyrus. "I've done the best I can for him. His hands now can keep his head."

It made him sick when Tom declined to go as third officer on the *Ajax*, Canton-bound and, investing his savings in a long, low Baltimore-built schooner that could walk into the wind like a teal, went into the coasting trade.

"Blue water is the real thing, son," said Cyrus in high dudgeon. "Stick to blue water and you'll steer clear of trouble. It's only when you get on sound-

ings that trouble comes aboard. It's a man's job to bring tea and silk home 'round the Horn; it's a peddler's job to haul fish an' hides an' shingles to Philadelphia for those damned Quakers."

But Tom was adamant. The new republic had no navy worth the name. It could not protect its commerce. England impressed American seamen. France held up American ships on the high seas. Citizen Genet, not long before, had formally demanded American aid in the French war against England, and England was ready to fight if that aid was given. In the meantime the republic could only wait.



FIRST OF FOUR PARTS

Tom strode into the inn, took off his coat and entered the little room behind the bar, where the old captains gathered and where a Swayne was always welcome. The moment he entered the room a voice shouted out above others raised in argument.

"Here's Tom Swayne now . . . Tell the man he's here. Tell him to come in . . ."

At that shout English George, the bartender, himself a deserter from one of Hood's frigates, opened the door and thrust a man inside the room, while Tom was still wiping the rain from his eyes. At a signal from English George the stranger slouched forward, a gray-bearded, limping figure in rough clothing, water-soaked and dripping. He lurched as he walked and brought up at the table's edge, gripping it with both hands as he stared at Tom from puckered eyes.

"Tom," he said dully: "Tom Swayne! Don't you know me? Many's the time I've made you run from scuttle-butt to galley with a half-inch colt—an' now, by God, you don't even know me. . . ."

"Don't know you!" Tom had him by both elbows in a warm grip. "Ben Ives," he shouted. "Bo's'n of the *Catherine* and me not know you! Think I'm a fool? What 're you doin' here, Ben? Where's my father? When did the *Catherine* berth?"

"The *Catherine* ain't in," said Ives. "That's what brung me here, Tom." Ives glanced over his shoulder. It was plain that what he had to say was for Tom's ears alone. "Git a room where we kin talk," he said.

"Here, George . . ." Tom seized the bartender by a free arm. "Get a bottle of white Santa Cruz rum and show us to the office. Quick, man!"

HE led the way to the office, waited till George lit a lamp, almost thrust him out of the door, slammed it shut. The moment the lock clicked Ives straightened up.

"I got some damned bad news for you, Tom," he said.

Tom knew that already. "Lost?" he asked sharply.

"Yes . . . an' no," said Ives, coughing over his liquor. "She's lost, but not like you think. I've come nigh a thousand miles to tell you."

"Damn it all, Ben, talk."

"We cleared from Rio in September, Tom. We was loaded almost chock-a-block wi' Rio coffee and Brazil wood and fancy notions and I ain't sayin' that th' Old Man hadn't done some shrewd diamond buyin' with them damned Portuguese for some o' the stones from the mines at San Luis Potosi. You know the sayin': 'Lose your fore-topsail an' find it in a Portuguese hold.'

"Cap'n Cyrus took on two passengers at Rio, a British major—name o' Derwent—an' his daughter. The major'd been mixed up in the Silva Xavier revolution and the gov'ment had offered a thousand doubloons fer his head. It wasn't wuth that much . . . He had to leave Brazil to save that head an' he'd never have got clear but for Miss Ruth.

"By God, Tom Swayne, there's a girl for you! Big as I am an' all the gold of Manoa on her head . . . We had a hell of a time gittin' the major clear. Miss Ruth got him aboard. She made him shave off his mustache an' she put hoops on him an' painted his face like a nigger. She padded him up like Neptune's wife when a ship crosses the line an' she walked him aboard the *Catherine* wi' a bag o' laundry on his head right under the eyes of that damned fool of a Portuguese vice-governor, Senhor Pedrato. Ruth Derwent is all right. . . ."

"Go on," said Tom grimly. "Miss Derwent can wait. Tell me the rest."

"I wish to God I didn't have it to tell. We worked up to Trinidad an' picked up a cargo o' guns fer the French. Since they got into their black war in Haiti the frogs 'll buy anything that they kin burn powder in. We got Haiti coffee fer the arms. Even our main top was filled with it, I tell you. Then we run up the Windward Passage . . ." He paused and drank noisily as a horse drinks. . . . " 'Member Long-twelve Porton, Tom?"

Tom's face grew gray and grim. Every man and boy who used the sea from Kennebec to Cape Sable knew of Long-twelve Porton. Porton, the pirate. Porton, the fair successor to Teach and Avery! A hundred years earlier Porton would have rivaled Henry Morgan or L'Ollonois in cruelty . . . Porton, the most dreaded picaroon on The Account.

"He fair ran us down," said Ives dully. "We was stuffed so full o' that damned coffee that it 'most run out of our ports when we tried to clear our guns. He caught us in a flat calm off Turk's Island and he brung the wind with him. He had a big yaller ship that was pierced like a corvette. Ten big guns to a side . . . God a'mighty. . . ."

"Surely the *Catherine* didn't strike without fighting. . . . ?"

"Strike? No. Fight? How in hell could we fight? Them damned French in Jacmel took most of our powder. His second shot brung down our gaff. The traveler block caught old Cap'n Cyrus on the head. When I come to I was a-lyin' in the fore-peak, wi' the rest of our men in a heap. You know we on'y carried eight men before the mast—that damned pirate had more'n a hundred an' fifty. They was all over us at once. When he boarded us his men was like bees in his fore-riggin'. God! If I'd only had a thirty-two

pound carronade wi' a bushel o' langridge. . . ."

"Go on." Tom poured a stiff drink. He needed it.

". . . Porton overhauled the crew. He gave 'em the choice. Join him er walk the plank. Only one refused to join him. You mind Jimmy Sykes? Him whose mother's a widder woman over by Smyrna?" Tom knew the family well and nodded briefly. "Jimmy told Porton he'd see him sixty fathom deep in hell before he'd join him."

"Well? What then?"

"Two twelve-pound shot tied to his feet; a plank run out to leeward an' the kid shoved out on the plank. Then the bark was luffed. . . ."

"Stop," said Tom hoarsely.

"The rest of 'em j'ined him," Ives said. "I can't blame 'em much, sir. Then Porton, he called Cap'n Cyrus into the cabin with the passengers an' after a talk with them he writ a letter. Then Cap'n Cyrus writ a letter too. They gave me the two letters an' . . . here they are."

HE held out an oilskin-wrapped package that Tom took mechanically. As he tore it open a folded paper fell into his hand. It was addressed to him and was sealed with a huge blob of red wax. The smaller letter was open. He read the open letter first. It was very brief; just a formal power of attorney from his father. He tore the other paper open, while Ives talked on unheeded.

"They landed me in the Bermudas. Them damned Britishers 'd do anything fer trade. They deal with pirates same as with Quakers. Just like Charleston in South Carolina does. Then I ketched a Baltimore hide ship an' here I am. . . ."

Intent on the letter, Tom paid no attention to him. That letter read:

"If payment of forty thousand dollars is made as directed in this letter Captain Cyrus Swayne and his two passengers will be released unharmed. If payment for any reason is not made the prisoners will pay. Twenty thousand dollars will be paid in American gold. The remaining twenty thousand in supplies as follows:"

. . . . Followed a long list of ship's supplies and stores. . . .

"Payment will be made to Mons. Le Clave, the French commissary of war at Jacmel. If any change is made in the plan for payment he will instruct you. . . ."

"Porton, he got your name from Cap'n Cyrus," said Ives. "Then Cap'n Cyrus writ that order, so you kin raise the money. What the hell does that mean?" he asked, straightening up.

The sharp clatter of a galloping horse came to them clear and distinct; then the slide of shod hoofs halting and a volley of sharp gravel that flung like shot against the shingled walls. Then the door of the main room flung open and a voice shouted out above the noises of the night.

"News," it said. Straight from Philadelphia, where the Honorable Congress meets. War with France has been declared. War, I tell you! Our frigate *Adams* took the French frigate *La Havre* in a three-hour action off the Florida coast. Our loss eight men killed an' seven wounded; French losses eighty-seven killed an' thirty-two wounded. The tender *Dayton* brung the despatches. It's all in this paper."

Tom flung from the room, snatched the paper from the tired man and spread it on the table while the men from the captains' room crowded about him.

"What is it, Tom? What's the word?" Old Captain Diggs of the brig *Happy Joe*, trading to Halifax, panted in Tom's ear. Tom merely pointed to a huge black headline:

WAR WITH FRANCE

But below that heading his eyes caught an item that held his gaze as a lodestone holds a needle. It read:

"As we go to press we have been informed that Letters of Marque have recently been granted by the French Republic to the notorious pirate, Long-

twelve Porton, through General de Berrien, Military Governor of Haiti. The immediate effect of this will be to turn a notorious pirate into a legalized privateer. Either will be equally at home under the tricolor of the Bloody Republic."

There was more to it but that was enough. Tom flung the paper aside and drew Ives out of the room.

"Come with me to the *Iris*," he said. "You need food and rest and I need to do some figuring."

"I know." Ives nodded wisely. "Figurin' on where kin you pick up a cargo for Jacmel, eh? Where you kin raise the money, huh?"

"Something like that. But I'll need other things than money."

"Money 'll buy 'em all," quoth Ives sagely. "I know."

Down in the cabin of the *Iris* Tom got out a bottle of rum that had never paid duty and slid it across the cuddy table to Ives, who drank and waited. Tom cleared his throat.

"Listen to me, Bo's'n. I'm clearin' for Jacmel, of course. I want a crew. I want at least forty men. I want you to get them for me, but I want it understood that I'll not take a single man till I myself have talked with him."

"Pay?" asked Ives, pouring another drink.

"Ten dollars a month and one share per man in the profits of the voyage. I want eight six-pounder guns for the deck battery. I want small arms and I want a long twenty-four pounder on a swivel amidships. I want—"

"You kin pick up all that at Norfolk," said Ives. "I know old Smalley there. If you pay the price, old man Smalley 'd outfit a frigate to batter hell to pieces. I'm goin' with you, of course. I was your father's gunner on the *Hyder Ali*, Tom. Can't none of 'em lay a gun like me when a ship's wallerin' in a seaway. What's your plan?"

"Plan? All I know, Ben, is that my father and his passengers, one of 'em a girl, are in the hands of that damned pirate, Porton, who's never been known to show mercy to any one. He'll take the ransom and break his word. And he's right now sailin' under French colors. I only know, Ben, that I'm going to get them and him—and for what he's done, for the murder of Jimmy Sykes, if I get my hands on Porton, I'll hang him from his own yardarm. . . ."

"Still I don't quite see—" began Ives. Tom cut him short.

"The French have commissioned Porton," he said. "We are at war with France. I mean France to pay my bills. I shall take out letters of marque myself, Ben. First of all I want forty men."

"You'll get 'em," said Ives. "You've already got a gunner. That's me. An' when you land Porton, I'll be first to walk aft wi' the slack o' the halter."

"I'll see Mr. Gordon in the morning," said Tom.

CHAPTER II

"STAND CLEAR, THIN SKULLS!"

MONEY! That was his first and greatest need and only Judge Gordon, his father's oldest friend, could help him. He must see him at once.

Peter Gordon, partner with Cyrus Swayne in many a China venture, had never forgotten what he owed to old Cyrus's skill and foresight. Summoned from his early breakfast, he greeted Tom warmly, dragged him into the dining room and listened wide-eyed. Finally:

"War with France," he said hotly. "By God! It ought to have come long years ago, when Mr. Washington was President, when that cur Genêt tried to drive His Excellency into a war with England to help those damned murderers of the French Directory. But this is bad news, Tom. Very bad news, sir. In God's name what will you do?"

"First of all, Judge, I will need money

to outfit my own vessel. I will need at least ten thousand dollars. I presume we can raise that on my father's power of attorney. Can that be done, sir?"

"Easily. There will be no trouble about that. Tom. But you will need much more than that. The ransom is set at forty thousand dollars."

"My dear sir, I mean the French to pay that. They have given letters of marque to this damned pirate. Porton. It is only fair that they pay his bill."

"But . . . my God, Tom! You know the reputation of that man Porton—"

"I do, sir. That's what I mean. No matter how much I pay Porton he will never keep his word. Let me carry out my plans. Raise ten thousand dollars in cash for me. I may not need so much So much the better if I don't. I'll get my outfit at Norfolk. In the meantime, sir, do you write letters for me to all the influential men you know in Philadelphia. I want a letter to President Adams. I want one to Mr. Secretary Stoddart, from Maryland—"

"Good God! The very man to help you, Tom. His mother was my father's sister." And Judge Gordon almost leaped for his secretary, snatched paper and sandbox from a pigeon-hole; his quill pen squealed as he drove it across the paper.

"I'll be back in an hour for the letters, sir." Tom rose. "In your letters ask all the influential men you know to help me get letters of marque and reprisal for the schooner *Scorpion*. I'm changin' the name of my schooner, sir. I'll sail at once for Philadelphia and reach there tomorrow night. I'll equip there and at Norfolk on my way south. I'll need at least ten thousand in gold."

"It's insane, of course," said Judge Gordon. "But so was Jason's quest. So is everything that is worthwhile. I think I'd do the same if I were Tom Swayne and twenty-five. Come back in two hours for your letters, boy."

In less than two hours Tom had his letters and they warped the *Iris* out of dock to catch the evening tide. The moment Tom leaped the rail Ives took the deck at a word from Tom.

"Give her all she'll carry. Let her drag what she can't carry. We must make Philadelphia tomorrow if we carry away everything."

There was little danger of that, though the wind boomed across the inner bay in great flaws and the *Iris* laid down to it till her lee rail drew a white line through the smother and Parks, at the wheel—the *Iris* carried a sea-going helm—stood ankle-deep in the froth. Ives glanced about him admiringly.

"She walks like a lady," he growled.

"She'll need to," said Tom briefly. "She's going to walk the wet sea-lanes after Long-twelve Porton."

Ives goggled at him.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

Tom made no reply. He dived into the cuddy, where Ives presently found him sitting at the cabin table, on which he had laid a long rifle. He looked up as Ives came down the companion-way.

"Look here, Ben—" Tom grinned at him, "You were gunner on the *Hyder Ali* with my father. You're going to be my gunner. What do you know about rifles? How much further will a rifle carry than a smooth-bore of the same calibre?"

"About twice as far and ten times as accurately," said Ives with a grunt.

"Any reason why we shouldn't rifle a long twenty-four?" demanded Tom quietly.

Ives drew a long breath and let it go explosively. "My God," he said softly, "nobody ever thought of doin' that."

"Yes they did. Colonel Ferguson thought of it in 1778. So did a man named Robins in 1745, but he never carried it past the experimental stage. Ferguson did. All right. Now look here. When I use a rifle I patch the bullet with leather or linen. Leather for choice. We'll do that with the twenty-four pound shot too. Listen here, Ben. I'm goin' to Phil-

adelphia with letters that will get me letters of marque for my schooner. I will equip where I can get what I want. Your job in Philadelphia will be to get our men. I'll attend to the guns. Those peace-lovin' Quakers will make what I want if they haven't got it. I want eight six-pounder guns for the main deck battery and I want one long twenty-four pounder. I'll have it rifled. How do I know? All I know is it can be done. They can build a tube flat with the lands set in it and then roll it up and slip it in the barrel. I don't care how they do it. I want it done. I want that gun mounted on swivel and in gimbals too. Look here."

He drew a pencil from his pocket and drew a sketch on the table.

"See here. Mounted aft the foremast, it can't fire for two degrees each side of the mast. It'll be about the same when it fires astern. But it can play on any other target."

"Why mount it in gimbals?" demanded Ives incredulously. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Neither did any one else." Tom grinned at him. Then he drew some more lines on the table.

"We've got a mighty little free-board," he said. "When we're on a wind we can't use our lee guns. We can only get action from our main-deck guns when we're on an even keel. The guns 'll be awash if any sea is on. The six pounders in battery 'll range maybe five hundred yards in a quiet sea. If I mount a long twenty-four, rifled, on a swivel and in gimbals I can lay it on anything except what is dead ahead or dead astern. What's the range of a long twenty-four, Ben?"

"Smooth-bore about twelve hundred yards," said Ives. "That's when she's bein' fired under the best conditions. Now when I was on the *Hyder Ali*—"

"The twenty-four I'm figurin' on 'll range a mile, unless I'm all wrong—and I don't believe I am. If you can hit with it, that is."

"When I was on the *Hyder Ali* with Barney—" began Ives.

"Damn the *Hyder Ali* and you, too," said Tom fervently. "Get on deck, Ben. I've got some work to do."

THE *IRIS* lay down on her ear and slid through the brown water. Peapatch Island dropped astern; Wilmington heaved up and dropped behind the western sky-line. Dawn found them at the Philadelphia wharf. As soon as decency permitted Tom hurried to the modest offices where Mr. Benjamin Stoddart, Secretary of a navy that consisted of perilously few ships, wrestled with his problems. Judge Gordon's letter brought him to his feet with outstretched hand.

"I see you're the first of a new grist," he smiled. "Tell me exactly what you want, Captain Swayne. How can I help you? Judge Gordon tells me you wish letters of marque and reprisal."

Tom told him and the secretary nodded grim approval.

"You propose, then, to search for this man Porton, who has had his piracy smeared over by a lick of French oil and to make him release his prisoners. Is that it?"

"And to make the French pay for it," said Tom briefly. "They've given the dog letters of marque. I'd like letters of marque from my own government, sir, for the schooner *Scorpion*."

"I'll do better than that, sir. I'll give you letters to the men to whom you must go for your equipment. Sit down, sir."

In an hour Tom was given letters that were to invoke all the powers of the government to help him. Finally the secretary looked up from his writing.

"When can you get to sea?" he asked.

"That will depend on the work of the yards, sir. I hope in a couple of weeks."

It took more than two weeks and it was the busiest period he had ever known. With naval recruiting parties picking up men where they could, good

hands were hard to get; but old Ben Ives was invaluable. He got together a complement of thirty-three men, hardy Bay sailors who knew Tom and old Cyrus—at least by reputation—and who were more than willing for a fling along the Spanish Main. The long twenty-four pounder gave the most trouble, but it was done at last; under the curious eyes of the crew it was installed on its swivel with gimbal bearings aft the foremast. At last a great bundle of green hides was flung upon the decks. Men wondered at the changes made in that little schooner but Tom stood firm.

"I know exactly what I want," he growled to the master rigger in the government yard. "I don't care a damn what you were told. I want some whip to my masts. You want to stay everything as you do a frigate, as stiff as a wall. I want some play to my masts, so she'll come about like a live thing and not snap everything off like a bunch of frosted carrots."

"Gun ports, sir?" demanded the carpenter.

"Four on a side in the waist. Never mind the forward ports. My swivel gun 'll attend to that. . . ."

It all took time, of which they had little. It took work, of which they had much to do, but finally the transformed schooner *Iris* lay at her moorings off South Street, complete and ready for sea. Tom looked along his decks and ticked off thirty-eight men. A few Marine officers watching the departure envied Tom those men and waved a cheery farewell as Tom came out of the cabin with a bottle in his hand and the carpenter at his heels with a board on which was painted the name *Scorpion.*

"It's said to bring bad luck to change a ship's name," he remarked to Jerry Lynn, his first officer, but this is different. We're a scorpion now; we aim to sting a few Frenchies before we make the Delaware Capes again. I'll christen her now."

He broke the rum bottle on the heel of the bow-sprit and the men grinned as he called out to his steward:

"Serve rum to all hands, Merton. Mr. Lynn, get your anchor, if you please."

The clank, clank of the capstan pawls walked the *Scorpion* up to her anchor. Then: "Anchor's aweigh, sir," Lynn called.

"Cat it. Give her all she'll stand, mister. We'll clear the Capes tomorrow."

For hours on the way down the bay Tom and Lynn and old Ben Ives watched the schooner's every move. Much would depend on the ease with which she handled. The great blocks of Brandywine granite stowed along her keel for ballast held her down and the weight of the guns on deck made no difference. She lay like a duck on the water and her sharp bows cut it like a knife.

"Yonder's the last of Cape May." Tom pointed to a smudge astern. "Keep her a good full now. So—hold her as she is." He glanced at a chart on the cuddy table and gave the course to the man at the wheel. "Got it?"

"Aye, aye, sir." The man stowed a huge quid of tobacco in his cheek and spun the wheel deftly as Jerry Lynn stepped aft to the little rise of the deck.

"ALL hands lay aft," he shouted.

They stood expectantly as Tom eyed them. Ives had done well, he thought. Not a face was there but good American faces and two Negroes, who grinned expectantly.

"You men know why you shipped. . . ." Tom's voice rose above the hum of the wind in the rigging. "We're at war with France. She has a rich island commerce and we want our share of it. How many of you know of Long-twelve Porton?"

They glanced at each other and a few faces darkened. Tom went on:

"Porton figures in this. Last month he captured my father's bark, the *Catherine*, homeward bound from Rio. Porton holds a letter of marque from the French government. I hold one in our service. I mean to take toll of the French trade and I don't mean Porton to know who I am. Each one of you has a lay in this venture. One share per man. The more we take, the more you get.

"Now mark this: we haven't got the weight of metal that'd enable us to face a big ship at close quarters, but we've got a long midships gun that outranges any gun I ever saw and we've got a schooner that can outsail anything afloat. It remains to see what kind of a gunner we have. Mr. Ives, get the paulin off that long gun and break out some round shot and a roll of these green hides we shipped."

They watched as he stood over the carpenter and directed his work on four empty casks. Those casks were spiked to two spars at right angles to each other and on the framework a great canvas screen, twelve feet square, was erected. Tom had four men carry it to the rail.

"Ease it overboard now," he said. "Luff a little, helmsman. So. That's good. Gently with it, now. That's Mr. Ives's target."

The *Scorpion* crept into the wind's eye and the improvised target slid overboard; then the schooner was held to her course while Tom watched every movement. Finally:

"There you are, Mr. Ives," he shouted. "There's your target. That twelve foot screen represents the very soul of a frigate. See what you can do with that long gun. Ease off the gun tackles. Never mind quoins. You'll not need them for elevation, I think. The gimbals should give you that. All right, Mr. Ives. Fire when you're ready."

Every eye watched the powder charge being placed. Watched curiously the great twenty-four pound shot being lifted from the rack and wrapped in a piece of one of the green hides. Then it was thrust by main strength down the long gun and when the rammer rang true and clear Ives gave a final tap.

"Seated all right, sir," he grinned. "Stand clear all, thin skulls."

Old Ives, squinting along the line of the trunnions, settled back and squinted across the sights.

"Good God," shrilled a voice: "That target's a mile away and to windward. The gun's never been poured that kin hit that."

Ives bent over the gun.

"Never mind muzzle sights," said Tom quietly. "Lay the gun by sighting along the barrel above the trunnions. Allow twelve feet for windage."

Ives touched the breech lightly and it swung in his hands like a well-oiled door, so perfect was its balance. Satisfied, he stepped back and pulled the lanyard. A tiny spit of white smoke leaped from the vent; a barking roar seemed to make the deck lift and a ball of white smoke drifted down wind. Every man found himself breathlessly watching that distant target. It laid down suddenly in the water and came back to an uneven keel.

"Whoosh!" Marten, a Cape May man, uttered a sharp oath. "That's a clean hit. Did any man ever see the like o' that?"

Tom chuckled.

"Mind over matter," he said. "Some

day they'll make 'em as Patrick Ferguson made his rifles—to load in the breech. They'll have real guns then. Wait till we see what our French friends think of this."

"She's a scorpion all right," said Marten, patting the weather rail. "An' she's sure got a sting in her tail. That long gun 'll make many a Frenchman sick if we have luck, sir."

"Fire five shots more," said Tom. "We'll have gun practice each day till we can get our score with six shots. That's why I shipped so much powder. Mr. Ives, have the compass points marked with paint on the deck around the gun carriage, so you can get your figures to lay her in the night if you have to do it. Now for the target."

That target was nearly a total wreck when they picked it up.

Each succeeding day saw a new target dropped overboard. Sometimes Ives was warned of it. More frequently he was not. The gun crew learned to swing that long gun with deadly swiftness and accuracy. There was no haste or lost motion. It lasted for two full weeks. Tom finally called Lynn to the weather side of the quarterdeck.

"All right, Mr. Lynn," he said, "we can bear up now for our cruisin' grounds."

"And where may that be, Captain?" inquired Lynn.

"The Devil's Graveyard," said Tom. "The Mona Passage west of Porto Rico. We'll blood our hounds there before we try our final venture."

CHAPTER III

ON THE ACCOUNT

"TELL me this if you can . . ." Marten, loafing on the main hatch, watched Tom and Jerry Lynn on the after-deck; "what're we hangin' about here for, while

the big pickin's slip past us to the eastward? We're too far north, I tell you. I've been here before."

"Was you by any chance on The Account?" demanded Tilton.

The insult passed and Marten eyed Gissel, a Philadelphia rigger cursed with an itching foot. Gissel had gone aloft to serve the head of the forestay. He was staring off to the southwest.

"What d'you see?" boomed Lynn.

"I can't quite make it out, sir. It's either a cloud or else it's a . . . I see it now! Sail ho!" he shouted shrilly.

Tom, his glass about his neck, went up the main shrouds two ratlines at a time and landed in the main crosstrees, staring where Gissel pointed. He steadied his glass against the topmast and screwed it to a focus as the schooner rocked in the sea-way, the reef points pattering on the canvas.

Suddenly a shape crept across the lens and he drew a sharp breath. Gissel was right. It was a sail. His eyes caught the gleam of the sun on canvas, like the white on newly-washed china. At last he made her out. A brig of some two hundred tons, as black as Erebus; she was bringing the wind down with her as she came.

"French," said Tom breathlessly. "She can't be anything else. Look at the hoist of her topsails! Look at her sheer and overhang. All French. We don't need *that* to tell us."

"That" was a black ball that ran jerkingly to the brig's peak and broke out into the tricolor of France.

The wheel spun over; the schooner's head swung around. The jib filled with a fine rattle of blocks and the *Scorpion* was off on a new course.

"Keep her a good full," cautioned Tom. "Run up well to windward. Mr. Ives, drop a shot across her forefoot and Mr. Lynn, show French colors."

They stared at him unbelievingly, but Ames bent a French tricolor to the halliards and hauled up, as Ives jerked the tompion from the forward six pounder and two men leaped to their places. The flat report blew away down wind and the ball skipped from wave to wave and passed a hundred yards ahead of the brig. She yawed sharply. The next moment a whistle rang out and six gun ports along the brig's side dropped slowly open as a a sleepy man yawns. Tom turned to the long gun.

"Ives, slap a twenty-four pound shot into him just abaft the foremast."

The long gun swung in its bearings; old Ives, his gray beard thrust aside by the breech of the gun, squatted on the carriage. The ship's crew lined the rail and every head was thrust outboard as a sudden jet of white smoke broke from the gun. It was followed by a burst of white splinters from the brig's side; a dimple showed in her gun port line. Then a gun in battery exploded on the stranger and a yell drifted down wind as the crew of that brig realized that they had been hulled at a range too great for their own guns. Another gun spoke; the ball dropped halfway to the schooner.

"Give her another and take the fight out o' the fool," said Tom. "Put one into her cabin."

Working like a demon, Ives swung his gun; three men loaded it. A shot crashed into the brig; she lay a helpless target under the long gun.

Marine signaling was in its infancy, but there was no mistaking obvious intent. A shot across a forefoot meant "Stop." A shot slapped into the hull between wind and water meant "Stop damned quick or take the consequences." In this case the consequences promised to be serious. Helpless with wrath that seemed to fairly crackle, the big brig obeyed the orders of her puny antagonist. Her mainyard swung slowly aback as she hove to; a sharp crackle of angry voices came across the water.

"She's French." Tom turned to Lynn. "See if any man can speak French."

Two men came forward.

"All right, Elsion; you and Tone stand by to help me if I need it. Now all you men, listen. That brig's heavily armed. She's got a good sized crew and heavier metal than we've got. On the other hand we can sink her without ever coming in range of her guns if we choose. But we dare not board her. You two men who can speak French take a boat and pull over to that brig. Tell that brig's captain that Captain Porton is waiting to receive his surrender. Get that straight! I am Captain Porton for the time being. Tell him that Captain Porton demands that the brig's captain come aboard at once and brings his papers. If he doesn't come, I'll sink him."

The men stared at him round-eyed but the boat got away with Mr. Wharton, the second officer in charge. Lynn turned to Tom.

"You're takin' a mighty long shot," he said.

"I don't think so, Jerry. That man Porton got his letters of marque from the military governor of Haiti. It's hardly likely that a French merchant captain knows Porton by sight. They'd put the width of the Atlantic between them and him if they knew he was about. That brig has kept her home port till her master heard that Porton was sailing under French colors. Then she thought she was safe. Now Porton picks up French shipping while he sails under French letters of marque."

"If Porton ever turns up again in a French port after that master of the brig yonder gets back and tells his story, they'll hang or guillotine him first and investigate later. The French are that way." Tom grinned. "Here comes the boat. Did you ever see a madder man?"

THE French skipper made up in anger what he lacked in size. He leaped the *Scorpion's* rail at a bound and almost ran aft to the foot of the main-mast where Tom awaited him.

"Your men . . ." The man spat out the words in fairly good English . . . "This is disgraceful, sir. I sail from Jacmel after they have told me it is safe. They tell me you sail under our flag an' now you thieve and rob French ships on the high seas. Are you Captain Porton?"

"If you choose . . ." Tom bowed politely and the man sputtered. "Give me your papers, sir." He almost snatched them from the fiery little Frenchman and ran an eye over them. "They seem to be in order. The brig *Le Cerf de Foret,* out o' Bordeaux homeward bound from Jacmel . . . Captain Binet master. Cargo . . . Hm! Consigned to Adolph Metier and Company. Indigo, sugar, dye-woods. What's this?" His eye stopped at an entry; then he read it aloud: " 'Frs. 300,000 in specie. Gold. Huh? You carry three hundred thousand francs in gold?"

Little Captain Binet fairly spat in his wrath.

"The damned fools," he snapped. "I warned them but they knew better. I told them to send it in one of the homeward bound frigates. They would have saved the insurance, too. They thought they knew better—"

"Wait a bit . . ." Tom paused with a finger on the entry on the manifest. "Just what is this gold, Captain Binet?"

The question seemed to cork the flow of speech of the fiery little man.

"You'd better talk, Captain," said Tom warningly. "Remember. Long-twelve Porton knows how to make his prisoners remember where their gold is hidden. A slow-match between the fingers will help a slow memory. Now about this gold—"

"Damn them and their folly." The little Frenchman groaned. To give up gold, even gold that did not belong to him, was like losing his eye-teeth. "You'll find it anyhow," he muttered. I'd better tell you. It's stowed away in seven butter kegs in the cabin storeroom aft. Where did it come from? How do I know? I can only tell you, sir, that I was told it is money paid by the family of the negro leader, Toussaint l'Ouverture, for the freedom that he never got. That money was being sent to France, where General Moreau needs gold to pay his troops on the Rhine."

"Never mind," said Tom. "They'll just have to wait a bit longer, that's all." I will send you back to your brig at once, Captain Binet. You will send back by my boat the kegs of gold you mention. You will lay to till I have verified the contents. If all is as you say, you will lower your boats and get your men into them. You can take all your personal belongings. In an hour I sink the brig with gunfire."

Binet's eyes bulged. Even Lynn made a motion of protest.

"Choose," said Tom briskly. "Send me the gold and I let you get away safely

with all hands. Refuse and take your chances. Choose."

For a brief moment Binet stamped the deck. He was brave enough, but there was no choice. It would be just like that man Porton to sink the brig with all hands and then to fire on swimming men. He had heard of his having done exactly that! The best he could get was a promise of their lives. That was more than most men got from Porton.

"If I send the gold you let all on the brig leave?" asked Binet.

"Of course. What should I do with prisoners?"

That was true. Binet saw it all now. Porton could not take prisoners to a French port. Swift consideration told him he was lucky. He nodded grimly and moved to the schooner's side, where the boat waited. The boat pulled back to the brig. Ives, loafing by the long gun, smiled cheerfully as he saw cask after cask lowered into the boat; then it pulled back to the *Scorpion* and the kegs were swung to the deck.

The moment that returning boat left the brig's side the French crew woke to life. Boat after boat was swiftly lowered and water and provisions fairly flew into them. In much less than the hour Tom allowed them, three boats were clear of the brig and were pulling hard for the blue loom of the land to the southwest, evidently fearful that Long-twelve Porton might change his mind.

"Take a party and see what that brig holds," said Tom to Lynn. "Loot her magazine. French powder 's better than ours. Hurry up."

"You're not going to sink her," said Lynn.

Tom grinned. "What would Porton do?" he asked. "That brig is worth sixty thousand dollars to our crew. I'm going to wait till those boats are out of sight; then I'll put Wharton and a prize-crew aboard her and start her for home. Hurry up. Get all her powder and whatever else we can use. I want that crew to reach land safely, with perhaps a little hardship. That'll make 'em love Porton. If we have luck, this ought to close every French port to him and send a half dozen French frigates to call him to account."

The moment Lynn's boat got away the crew of the *Scorpion* crowded about the kegs. Marten, under Tom's instructions, smashed the top of one of the casks. A pack of fine sawdust flew out; underneath that, the gaze of the crew centered on roll after roll of dull golden coins neatly stacked and packed close together.

"There . . ." Tom snatched a handful of *francs d'or* and scattered them among the delighted crew. "That's a handsel of our luck. If it holds, you'll go home rich men. Can anybody see those boats?"

Gissel scrambled to the crosstrees and shinnied up the topmast; hanging by a hand to the truck, he shaded his eyes against the glare.

"Not a thing in sight, sir," he shouted.

"Come down then," Tom shouted: "If we can't see them, they can't see us. Fire a few blank shots, just to give them the impression that we sunk the brig. Now Mr. Wharton, take six men, board that brig and make your way to Charleston. She's worth all of a hundred thousand dollars, ship and cargo."

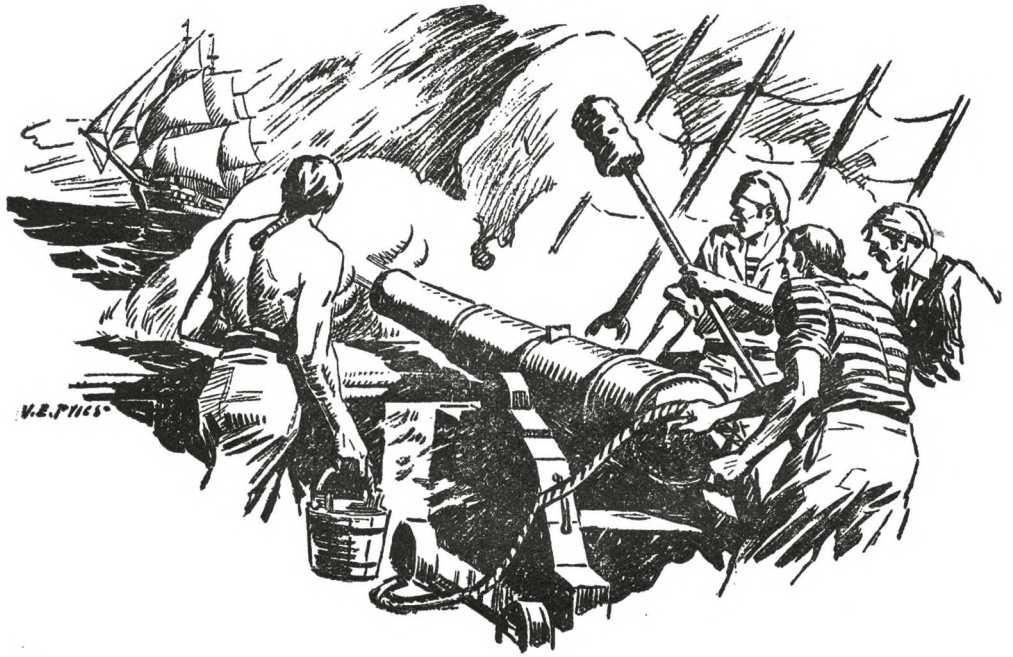
Before the sun was down the brig was a blot on the northern sea-rim. Then Tom summoned his crew aft.

"You saw what took place today. I wanted that Frenchman to believe that Porton captured a French ship and sunk her. When that word reaches French ports the whole French navy be after Porton. He'll be stripped of all French protection. Porton has demanded a ransom for my father. If that ransom is paid, I mean it to be paid from French pockets, taken under Porton's name. Now for ourselves. You men were each of you to have ten dollars a month and one share per man in the lay. I offer you a new deal. Whatever we take I only want expenses of the schooner to be paid. After that, all goes to officers and

men of the *Scorpion*, share and share alike. What's that you're mutterin' about, Grimes?" he asked sharply of a weather-beaten seaman who was talking from the side of his mouth.

"I was jist a-sayin', Cap'n, that it looks like we got to catch our game before we skin it."

"You can take your choice of the old agreement or the new. I don't care which. You all have heard a lot of this man Porton. They call him 'Long-twelve' because he carries long brass twelve-pounders on his main deck. You all know he's been on The Account for years. What do you reckon he's done with all his loot? Spend it? You know better. When we take Long-twelve Porton we take his loot, too. He can tell us where it is and I think I can make him talk—when we have him."



"By God, the cap'n 's right," said Gissel. "Shut up, Grimes."

They went forward laughing. Tom turned to find Lynn regarding him from sombre eyes.

"Listen, Tom. I didn't have a chance to tell you before but—there was a woman on that brig." Tom stared at him.

"Aye. Young, too. I saw her fixin's when I went below to find the keys to the powder magazine. I found this." He handed Tom a small book bound in ivory plates. Tom opened it mechanically and saw a name on the fly-leaf:

Delphine Le Gai
Jacmel, N. Setiembre 1775

"Good Lord," he said finally. "You're right. Binet dared not tell us he had a woman passenger, because he thought I am Porton. He's got a woman in one of those boats."

"She'll be all right," said Lynn. "They're all French together. They'll look after her."

"I'm not thinkin' of that," said Tom sharply. "I don't care what happens to the men. But that girl—the book shows she's twenty-two . . . She'll have to travel for days in an open boat with a lot of rough foremast hands. They're sure to land on Haiti, where the Negroes are all in revolt. You know what'll happen to any French girl who falls into their

hands. There's only one thing to do. "Put the helm over . . ." Tom turned to the man at the wheel. "After those boats."

It was remarkable how far the heavily-laden boats had traveled in a few hours. It was nearly sunset when the lookout picked them up. At a word from Tom, Ives fired a shot from the forward gun. As the shot plunged across the course the leading boat lost way; the others closing in, the three lay in a group and the *Scorpion* luffed. Tom hailed:

"Come aboard me at once, Captain Binet, and bring your lady passenger along."

A moment later Binet's boat pulled up under the counter of the schooner and Binet, profanely eloquent, helped a woman to the deck. He was about to follow her when he was suddenly thrust aside by a short, stocky Negro who vaulted to the deck and dropped, squatting at the woman's feet. Binet, angry and shaking, thrust the man aside.

"Who is this man?" demanded Tom of the Frenchman.

"*Mademoiselle's* servant," Binet shrugged his shoulders. "Her dog, if you choose. See here, Porton. Is this the way a buccaneer keeps his word?"

At the name Porton, the little Negro leaped to his feet, and scrutinized Tom closely. Tom turned to Binet.

"Is this man a Haitian?" he asked.

"God knows," said Binet. "I have heard men say that he was brought a slave out of Africa. Ask him. Mademoiselle wishes to accompany me in the boats.

Tom turned to face the girl. He was suddenly aware of a pair of dark eyes that seemed to emit sparks, of a face the color of rare old ivory and of a finely cut mouth that in repose showed scorn. There was no weakness in the chin and she said not a word as Binet burst into renewed speech.

"I beg you, *Capitaine*," he said: "not to do this thing. All men know Captain Porton. I can not resist you. You have the power to take *mademoiselle* if you choose. You have ruined me and sunk my brig. I ask you for mercy now." Little Binet shivered a little, remembering that Porton had never been known to show mercy—unless it paid him to do so.

"Sorry, sir. You will do as I say. I can not permit a white woman to be landed on the coast of Haiti. You should know what those risen slaves are when aroused. You men must take your chance. Get into your boat, sir, and be glad you have Long-twelve Porton's leave to go."

"Sir . . ." The little Frenchman's tone was desperate. "This is Mademoiselle Le Gai. She is the betrothed wife of Monsieur Le Clave, the French commissary of war at Jacmel. . . ."

"Put him overside," said Tom briefly. He felt that if he delayed he could not longer keep up the deception with the gallant little Binet. And that deception had to be maintained. Two men seized Binet, ran him to the rail and dumped him into his boat, as the *Scorpion* headed off again on her course. As Tom turned away from the rail he was aware of the girl's steady scrutiny.

"An now, *M'sieur*," she said gravely: "Will you be so good as to tell me your name?"

"Captain Porton," began Tom but she shook her head.

"Ah, no, *M'sieur*. I 'ave seen le capitaine Porton. He ees not like you. I have seen 'is ship. Eet is not lak dis ship. His ship ees . . . Ah w'at yu call eet? She 'ave twenty big gun all of brass . . . She ees as yellow as ze ripe mango. Ze name of Capitaine Porton's ship ees *La Belle de Bristol*." It was evident that Miss le Gai did not know the title given Porton's big yellow corvette by those who knew her. She was known as *The Bristol Slut* and was avoided like a lazar house.

"You seem to know a good deal about Captain Porton," said Tom.

"Ah, *oui!* Much more zan I like,

M'sieur. I do not lak heem. I see heem w'en Monsieur Le Clave give him ze papers from le general dat mak him from a pirate to a privateer. W'at you call *ohasse marie*. I know zat dis ship ees American. How do I know? Am I blind?" She pointed accusingly to a barrel of ship's bread that a man had rolled into the waist that bore the label: "Brandywine Mills."

Tom laughed.

"You shall hear it all," he said. "In the meantime, miss, be very sure of one thing: you are as safe as though in your own house. What is your man saying?" he asked suddenly, for the little Negro had seized the girl's hand and was jabbering excitedly.

"He say he know all along you are not Porton. He say he 'ave seen Porton."

"I see," said Tom. "*Mademoiselle*, I will show you a small stateroom that will be yours as long as you honor us with your company."

"I thank you, *M'sieur*. We go to . . . ?"

"We will talk about that later," said Tom as she turned away.

CHAPTER IV

DERELICT

"THIS girl may be a godsend," Tom turned to Lynn who looked his question. "Didn't you hear that frog-eater say that she is to marry Le Clave? Le Clave is my go-between with Porton. I'm takin' the money for my father's ransom to Le Clave for Porton. I'd like to know where he stands."

"Who?"

"Le Clave, of course. It was Le Clave who gave the letters of marque to Porton. But if dates are right, he must have agreed to act as Porton's agent before that. If that is so, then Le Clave is just a French official who's been doing dirty business with a pirate."

"What difference does that make?" asked Lynn curtly.

"It makes a lot of difference. If Le Clave is a decent fellow I'll run into Jacmel under a flag of truce."

"You will like hell," said Lynn. "You know how a privateer is regarded. The regular navy has a rule for all privateers. It is 'Give 'em the stem.' If they sight you and catch you they'll run you down and never stop to pick up even drowning men. Those damned French will pay no attention to a flag of truce."

"That may be, but the Negroes will," He waited till Lynn's face straightened. "They've pretty well cleaned up the French in the country, except for the ports. From what I heard at home before we sailed, this Negro leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, runs things outside the French lines. Bonaparte sent his brother-in-law, Le Clerc, over to conquer the land but he couldn't do it. This L'Ouverture calls himself the Bonaparte of Haiti. Don't forget that if Le Clave can't help us or will not, we still have this Negro, Etion."

"Huh. He's nothing but a servant," said Lynn scornfully.

"He's a *papaloi*," said Tom. "He's the witch-doctor of the people. He's the man who they believe can bring the dead back to life. Well, if we need to, we can use Etion. He's devoted to Ma'mselle Le Gai. He knows we saved her from Binet and his men, and from worse'n that if Binet ever gets to land. No, sir! We've got two good cards in our hands. First of all I'm goin' to tackle Miss Le Gai. Here she is on deck now."

She stood by the companion-way with a hand on the slide and her eyes were full of demure mirth. It was plain that she was not taking her situation seriously. She smiled a welcome as Tom stepped by her.

"If you care to hear me," he said, "I have a story to tell you." Even the man at the wheel craned his neck to listen. She listened avidly and when he stopped she spoke breathlessly.

"But *M'sieur*, I know you now. I knew

you were American, your ship told me that, but I did not know you then as I do now. I must right Monsieur Le Clave in this matter. The letters of marque were given to Porton over the official protest of my betrothed."

"He was Porton's agent before Porton had the letters of marque," said Tom dryly.

She flung her hands above in a pretty gesture.

"Still, *M'sieur*, you do not understand. We French in Haiti have been driven to our last ditch. At home they have forgotten us. With few men and little money we try to make head against a horde of bloodthirsty savages. I cannot make you understand what we have undergone. Men captured and burned alive merely because they were French. Women . . . you have saved me from the fate of women, *M'sieur. Biens!* Our men need arms where we can get them. That is why we dealt with Porton. I know whereof I speak. Porton came to M'sieur Le Clave. He told him that he had captured a ship loaded with arms that we French needed. He offered arms and powder if Monsieur Le Clave would negotiate for him for a ransom for his prisoners. But indeed, *M'sieur,* he did not say where or how he took those prisoners. He shall help you, *M'sieur.* So shall my father."

"They are French," said Tom grimly, "And I am American, and there is war between us."

"You have saved and helped the daughter of one French officer and the wife-to-be of another," she said, "Do you think a Frenchman lets that go unheeded? I tell you, you can sail into Jacmel and out undisturbed once it is known what you have done."

"I doubt it." Tom laughed a little, "I have sunk a French ship and I have let them believe their own ally did it. No, *Mademoiselle.* I will take you to Jacmel under a flag of truce but I will not do it under any mistaken ideas of chivalry. I will ask this much, will you discover for me where I can find Porton?"

"I will do better than that, *M'sieur.* I will have my father and my betrothed pay their debt to you. They will see that you find this man Porton. He too shall pay his debt."

"One moment, *Mademoiselle.* . ." Tom's eyes changed. The old quizzical light was no longer in them. They glinted like tiny points of glass: "This pirate Porton threatened my father's men with death unless they joined his crew. They call it being on The Account. Seven of them joined him to save their lives. One, a boy of seventeen, who refused to join he murdered. Tied a shot to his feet and drowned him. . . . "

The girl uttered an exclamation of horror. Tom went on:

". . . .That boy's father and mother were friends of my father. When I get to close quarters with this man Porton how do you think I shall pay my debt?"

"Indeed, *M'sieur,* I do not blame you and I theenk I know. But about entering Jacmel?"

"You shall go to Jacmel if the whole French navy is standing off and on before the place."

THEY raised Capa Samana at dawn and all that day they lay becalmed under the shoulder of that mighty hill that juts into the sea as a man's thumb sticks out from his hand. Ives, forward, had stuck a knife in the foremast and was whistling for a wind; the men were grouped in the shadow of the great foresail, whose reef-points pattered on the canvas as the schooner rolled a little in the sea-way. Suddenly a hail from the fore topmast cross-trees electrified the deck.

"There's a kind of a smudge off to the south, sir, that I can't make out," shouted Miller. "Looks like a boat or a bit of a raft."

A cats-paw caught the mainsail and

the wheel went over to meet the schooner as she fell over.

"There comes the wind at last," said Lynn. "It's the terral—the landwind. See it coming?"

The evening wind was making off the land and the water showed a dark line under it. The next moment the schooner heeled to it and headed seaward. That smudge grew and grew, but dusk had unrolled like a blanket before they closed within musket shot.

"It's a boat all right, sir." Keller, leaning over the cat-heads, glanced over his shoulder. "Two men in her. One's slumped down in the stern sheets and another between the oar-looms. Both seem to be dead."

The schooner ran down to leeward and luffed up; in five minutes the boat drifted down to them and thumped against the hull. Instantly a man leaped into the boat and made it fast, while Akers bent over the two men in the boat. The man in the stern sheets was a giant Negro. Dead. A great knife sticking in his back showed the manner of his death and a ring of dried, congealed blood showed that it happened perhaps the day before. Screaming gulls sheered wide as Akers bent over the man between the oars.

"This 'n ain't quite dead," he said, "but he soon will be. Throw me a line, some o' you soldiers. Rig a bo's'n's chair from the fore-gaff."

In two minutes the man was in the bight of a line and was lowered gently to the deck. At the sight of the prone figure Tom leaped as though under a knife-thrust.

"By God," he said sharply, "that's Gray, my father's steward on the *Catherine*."

Ives came running and bent over the man.

"Sure it's Gray," he said. "Last time I seen him was when he told Porton he'd jine him to save his life. Cap'n Cyrus told him then he'd come to no good end. He's on The Account at last, all right."

"Get him below at once," said Tom. "He was a good sailor once. Mr. Lynn, break out the medicine chest and have some rum handy."

"Huh. Abe Gray'd come back from hell fer some good rum," said Ives. But he helped carry Gray down into the cuddy, where Tom and Lynn began what hot coffee and hotter Santa Cruz rum completed.

"Musket ball through the shoulder," said Tom. "We'll have to probe that. Heat a ramrod in the galley fire and bring it here."

A careful examination disclosed a heavy musket-ball deep in the flesh. Gangrene had already tinged it with green. Tom glanced at it and turned away.

"That needs fire," he said. "Jerry, take some rum to the galley and heat it just short of boilin'. We'll need that."

It was grim and ghastly surgery, but so was all surgery at that time. When one of France's marshals was treated for a musket-shot wound in a frozen foot by pouring boiling brandy into the incision, a half-dead sea hand picked from a derelict boat in mid-Caribbean could expect no better. It was an hour before Tom and Lynn, both white-faced, sought the deck.

"I hope he'll pull through, but I doubt it," said Lynn.

"Huh. You can't kill him with an axe," sniffed Ives. "I seen him knocked overboard once when the main tack parted an' the block ketched him under the ear."

"And it didn't kill him? Lynn's tone was incredulous.

Busted the block," said Ives. "He'll be all right."

HE was far from all right next day, when Tom had him carried to the deck as the *Scorpion* threshed close-hauled to

the southeast. But Gray could talk. Much of what he said was not fit to be repeated, but Tom and Lynn and old Ives listened fascinatedly as Gray, propped against the rail, gulped down a stiff norwester of grog and struggled for breath.

"It was just like Ives says, Cap'n. We hadn't no chance when that devil Porton rounded us up in the forepeak on the *Catherine*. Did Ives tell you, sir, what Porton done to Jimmy Sykes? That boy was the only one of us all what had guts, sir. He went down in ten fathoms an' . . ."

"Never mind that," said Tom. "Tell me where my father is."

"When Porton put Ives ashore, sir, to make his way back to the States with them letters, he headed south. He had his big yellow corvette. She carries twenty guns, sir. Look out fer her. She's a slut. He carries a hundred an' twenty men. All of 'em on The Account, o' course. He run fer the Windward Passage an' picked up a ship loaded wi' arms for them revolutionists in Cuba. He stripped her, sir, an' took the arms. He was aimin' to sell them arms to the niggers in Haiti to fight agin the French. Then he learned about the *Santo Mano*. . . ."

"What's the *Santo Mano?*"

"Spanish ship outen Vera Cruz, carryin' plate to Spain. She was reported carryin' Zacatecas silver in bars and a lot of rich lading under crown seals. We heard, too, that the Mexican Viceroy, Brancefotte, was sendin' a lot of emeralds to the court by her. We picked the *Santo Mano* up offen Cabo San Mateo. Porton give her one gun. Carried away her mizzen-mast an' after that it was just a question o' time.

"You'd never guess what that damned pirate done, sir. He boarded her an' took her crew off to the *Slut* an' stowed 'em under hatches, while Porton looted the Spaniard. He got the silver. There was a hundred an' eighty bars of it; an' he got the emeralds. He's got 'em right now, sir, an' a lot more loot; then he sent the Spanish crew back to the *Santo Mano*. He'd smashed all her boats."

"Well?" Tom's blood ran cold, he sensed the reply.

"He laid to a cable's length away and sank her with gunfire," said Gray stolidly.

Both men stared. This was repeating the deeds of l'Ollonois with a vengeance. But, after all, it was no worse than the deeds of Carriere, in the Loire River in France, when he tied men and women together and drowned them in the river in his infamous *Noyades de Nantes*.

"Every man," said Gray nodding. "He drowned every man. After that he headed south fer his hidin' place. That's where he put Cap'n Cyrus an' the English major an' his daughter."

"What hiding place?" Where is my father now?"

"They was seein' too much on the *Slut*," said Gray. "Porton kep' 'em in the cabin most of the time. He'd have killed 'em all but fer the fact that the girl was good-lookin' an' he figured on a ransom fer the men. He made fer his hidin' place. That's a little island he calls El Cubil. He unloaded his cargo there an' put his prisoners ashore. His partner met him there too. That's a man named Batten. Port-fire Batten, they call him. Have you ever heard of El Cubil, sir?"

Ives let go a hot oath. Ives, who had sailed the Caribbean for a lifetime, knew things about that sea that only the old-time Spaniards could have told. Tom looked his question and Ives grinned as though it hurt him.

"Aye, sir," he said; "I've heard of it. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote of the place, I've been told. There was old Seth Prowse, too. He landed on the place. Seth told me it's the only place he ever seen where men have to dig fer wood an' climb fer water. He said there's only two peaks like needles stickin' out o' the sea an' mangrove swamps an' reefs all

around it. Anchorage? No, sir. I never heard o' none."

"But where is it?" demanded Tom. "I don't remember it on the charts."

"It ain't, no more'n Saint Brandon's Island is on the charts," scoffed Ives. "If you find it at all you'll find it about seventy-two west longitude an' about seventeen north latitude. If it's there at all."

"I'll comb the whole damned sea but I'll find it," said Tom. "You say my father is there?"

"Yes, sir. Porton sent 'em ashore an' he met his partner Batten there. Him an' Batten put the prisoners under guard an' they buried the loot. Then Batten left fer a cruise to the Venezuela coast an' Porton left after that. He didn't leave any guard with the cap'n an' the Britisher, 'cause he couldn't trust his men with that buried loot. Anyway, they couldn't git away. They've got no tools an' no boat. They're safe enough till Porton gits back on the *Bristol Slut*. . . ."

"How did you get away in the boat?"

"By bein' a fool," said Gray bitterly. "I'd made up my mind to cut an' run at the first chance I got. I thought I seen that chance a week ago. That black in the boat—Stephen Varien was his name, sir—he seen that Zacatecas silver an' some bags o' Portuguese gold stowed aft in the lazarette. We got some of the gold an' a bar o' the silver an' we was gettin' away with it when Porton seen us. They shot me an' then Porton throwed his knife at Varien. Then they overhauled our boat an' turned us loose without food er water. That was a week ago," he said wearily.

"Can you show me the way to El Cubil?"

"No, sir. I'm no navigator. I don't even know its latitude an' longitude. The best I can do is to warn you right now. Even if you diskiver where El Cubil is, don't you go nigh it with less 'n two hundred men—an' even then you keep a weather eye open. Cause why? Porton, he's got girl an' loot on that island an' he'll not give 'em up."

"I see," said Tom quietly. "Fasten a shot to that dead man," he said, "and heave a couple of cold shot through the boat's bottom. On your course."

"Where 're we headin' fer, Cap'n?" asked Ives. "I think we got a right to know, sir."

"We're headin' for Jacmel; after that, if God gives me grace, for El Cubil."

CHAPTER V

"COUNCILS OF WAR NEVER FIGHT!"

THEY rounded Cape Beata in half a gale and bore up to the northward on a long stretch. The coast curved away to the west in a dim blue line, behind which craggy hills showed like teeth against the skyline. Every man on the little schooner knew that the coastline spelled infinite danger for them. Any headland might conceal a French ship-of-war, for France's main hope of subduing the rebellious slaves lay in her ability to shift her troops from point to point by sea.

Any armed French ship was dangerous for the *Scorpion* at close range. Her safety lay in that long-range gun. Tom had two chances in his favor. The *Scorpion* was the fastest craft that he had ever

seen and that long twenty-four, with old Ives to handle it, could work war magic.

A clump of white and pink and yellow houses leaped at him above the skyline. He slipped down into the cabin for a look at his chart and came back with a grave face.

"That'll be Jacmel," he said quietly.

The entire crew had gathered in the eyes of the schooner, staring landward. From time to time a man muttered to a neighbor and cast occasional furtive glances at Tom and Lynn, who were standing by the rail.

"What's afoot among the men forward?" said Tom.

He was soon to learn. While he was still studying the shoreline old Weston, who had grown gray in the West India trade, came aft. Embarrassed at the importance of his mission, he paused six paces from Tom and touched his hat.

"The hands 'd like me to say a word for 'em, Cap'n," he said.

Tom dropped his glass on its lanyard and turned to him.

"Go ahead," he said. "What is it, Weston?"

"Cap'n, it's thisaway. You told us all that that 'ere devil, Long-twelve Porton, asks a price to free 'em. The gold that you took offen that French brig 'll pay the ransom. . . . That's all right, sir, but Wills, who was steerin' when Gray talked, told us about it an' the hands kind o' thought, sir . . ."

"All right. Heave ahead," said Tom patiently.

"Seems like a risky thing, sir, to pay that 'ere gold over to a man like Porton. It's even worse to give it to the man Le Clave, the Frenchman who's actin' fer Porton. You don't know Porton'll do what he said he'd do."

"Put it in English," said Tom gruffly. He was convinced that the men were using Weston to enforce some new demand.

"It's thisaway, Cap'n. If you give that gold to Le Clave he may or may not give it to Porton. If Porton gits it he may or may not turn his prisoners loose. He's already killed men enough to damn him. You know just what to expect from Porton. Sir, all hands says this: they figure each man's got a lay in the cruise o' the *Scorpion* an' in the gold we took offen the Frenchman. We all wants you to take the lump sum, sir. Do what you please with it. They figure that if you choose to take the risk of Porton's short dealin' you, they'd rather have you use the money to free the prisoners. O' course we all figure you'd on'y be throwin' the gold away but that's your business, sir. On'y. . . ."

"Thanks, Weston. Thank all hands for me." Tom was suddenly aware of a little glow. But old Weston was not yet done.

"Sir, they all say they'd like it if you'd shape a course fer that 'ere El Cubil, where Porton's hid his loot. If we kin find El Cubil we kin free the prisoners and git all Porton's loot."

"I want Porton," said Tom. ' 'We may have one hell of a fight when we meet."

"Ain't that what we come fer?" asked old Weston. "Think it over, sir. Every man-jack wants you to take his share n'use it like it was yourn."

"I'll talk it over with Mr. Lynn and Ben Ives," said Tom gruffly. "Better send a man aft to represent the forecastle. We'll hold a council of war."

WESTON shuffled forward muttering to himself something to the effect that councils of war never fight. There was enough truth in that to make Tom laugh as he drew Lynn aside.

"I've told 'em only half my plans," he said. "Listen to me, Jerry. First we've got to put Miss Le Gai ashore. We must do it at a place where she'll be safe from those damned natives. If we run into the port by daylight, even if we hoist a white flag, it'll mean trouble. There's only one thing to do. I'll lay to, out of sight of the town, until night.

When dark comes I'll land Miss Le Gai and Etion. I'll have to land her right in Jacmel itself, because if she lands outside the town she may fall into the hands of the rebel Negroes. Here's the big thing! I propose to land in Jacmel at night, to get my hands on the French commandant and use him as a hostage."

"To do what? What have the French got that we want?" queried Lynn.

"I want information about Porton," said Tom briefly. "It's not as crazy as it sounds. Look at the place through the glass and you'll see."

Jerry took the long glass and steadied it against a stay.

"Four ships in the harbor," he growled. "And I bet every damned one is armed. Look at the French redoubts and works outside the town. Of course that's to hold back the revolutionary forces. The slaves, I mean. They'll have a line of sentries along the shore, of course. That'll keep you from landin'."

"They'll not have men on the beach," said Tom. "It'd require too many men. They probably have a beach patrol. Why would they guard the inside of their own works? There 'd no danger to France from the sea. The Negro slaves have no ships. Perhaps an occasional canoe. No more. I'll drop a boat over after dark and take the girl ashore and see what I can find."

Jerry shook his head.

"How many men will you want?" he asked.

"Six. But only if they volunteer."

Lynn went forward and a loud argument broke out on the forehatch. He came back grinning.

"Confound 'em," he said: "Every man-jack wants to go. What now?"

"Keep off the land till dark."

For a half hour the schooner made an offing; then the helm was put up and they ran along the coast to the eastward. It brought the schooner at last near the cover of a high point, whose sea-rim was edged with giant trees. They ran along that shore for a mile until a deep bight gave from the sea.

"A schooner comes in handy for work like this," said Tom. "We can warp her right in among the trees if we choose. Send a kedge ahead in a boat and feel your way in, Jerry."

Working carefully, they kedged the *Scorpion* to an anchorage under the very lip of the cliff. The sails were left loose in the stops and a dozen loaded muskets were placed along the rail in case of need.

"Tell the cook to keep water boiling in his coppers," said Tom. "He may need it if any one tries to board us. Get a boat over."

A whaleboat slid very quietly overside and the men scrambled for places. Tom helped the girl to the stern sheets and old Etion almost leaped into the boat. As the bowman thrust her away from the schooner's side Tom called in a low voice to Lynn:

"Work her back along shore in two hours, and lie to off the middle of the harbor entrance, so I'll know where to pick you up. Be sure of this. It's important."

Blue dark dropped like a blanket. They pulled slowly and softly along the shoreline. Far away to the north, light from high-burning fires in distant valleys lit the sky; from time to time the night air was jarred by the throbbing rhythm of a great drum. That drum woke Etion, who rose to his knees and stared out across the night; they could see the whites of his eyes as he muttered fitfully and swept his left hand across his face.

The boat beached softly. Presently Ellis, the bowman, was knee-deep in the warm water, holding her off the shale. Then Tom leaped out, picked up the girl and waded ashore, three men at his heels. He set the girl on the beach and turned to the boat.

"Hold her right here till we return," he said. "Don't leave the boat. Be ready to shove off at a moment's notice. You three who are coming with me, turn

your hats up into tricornered hats like the French wear. Keep to the shadows as well as you can and don't speak under any provocation." Then he turned to the girl: "Now, *Mademoiselle*, you must guide us from here. You will understand that I must pass unseen. Will you kindly show us to the house of Monsieur Le Clave?"

Quickly but without haste she took his arm. In silence and with the three men following them they passed down the beach, heading for the main town, a half mile away.

EVEN at that time Jacmel was an important town, especially to the French. It was one of the few good seaports to which French ships had access. The slaves who had risen in bloody revolt had made the interior of that island paradise an inferno.

Jacmel was surrounded by a line of earthworks, on which some light guns were mounted; along that line a half dozen redoubts were garrisoned by both infantry and artillery. The defences made a trace of a half-moon about the place and were considered impregnable. Since the only enemies were some thousands of half-starved, wholly untrained slaves, there was reason for the belief. The shoreline, from redoubt to redoubt, was patroled by armed bodies. Altogether the inhabitants had good reason for feeling safe.

As Tom's little party passed along the beach path he heard the heavy-footed shuffle of soldiers. He dropped to his haunches and scanned the skyline; his eyes caught the loom of three bodies against the sky. Instantly he dropped flat and pulled the girl down beside him. His men dropped without warning.

"Alphonse," said a heavy, rumbling voice: *"Ou est le caporal?"*

The girl touched Tom's arm. When the patrol had gone some yards up the beach she whispered:

"Agoue or some other god helps you, *M'sieur*. Le sentinel, 'e say the password for ze night ees *Liberté . . . Eh bien!* 'E say another word too. 'E say *'Fraternité. . .* "

"That's all right," said Tom softly. "One is the parole; the other is the countersign. One answers the other. A sort of a check. It's a piece of luck that we heard them. Let's get along. Those men have passed out of hearing."

He rose and they hurried along the path. The lights of Jacmel drew closer and brighter. Just as they were rounding a clump of palm trees their quick ears caught the crash of a musket thrown to "Present" as a sentry hailed them.

"Qui va la?" he demanded: *"Vite. . . ."*

"Ami de la Republique. Liberté," said Tom quickly.

"Bon." Et puis . . . "Amis de la Republique. . . ."

"Fraternité. . ."

" 'E say 'Pass, friends of ze Republique'," whispered the girl. *"Vite!* Queeck, *M'sieur."*

Tom needed no spur; he hurried along the path while the sentry shouldered his fire-lock and resumed his tramping.

"Down thees street. Monsieur Le Clave live here. My father live with heem." The girl drew him past a corner where a light showed in a small tavern where some men sat in riotous argument. They headed for a great house, set far back among a clump of great trees.

Even in the tropical night Tom sensed a sort of grandeur about the place, that it was one of the relics of a princely state that had been overthrown by the revolt of the slaves. A light was burning dimly in the house and the girl stopped under a giant ceiba tree and touched Etion on the arm, speaking to him in a low tone.

In answer he moved like a shadow up the path, ran up the steps and tapped at an open window that reached to the porch floor. Instantly the light moved and a man appeared at the open window with a bell light in his hand. At sight

of Etion he almost dropped the light; then Tom saw him start forward. Etion waved a hand over his shoulder. The man set down the candle, almost thrust Etion down the steps and ran swiftly after him.

WITH a soft cry Mademoiselle Le Gai pulled her hand loose from Tom's arm and flung herself at the man. Tom heard a kiss, followed by a little sob; then the girl was back at his side with the man at her heels. As his eyes became accustomed to the dusk his speech became articulate. He flung an arm about Tom's shoulders without ceremony and spoke quickly in English that had a curious sibilant sound.

"Sir. Mees Le Gai has told me that you saved her life. I thank you. I am Gaston Le Clave and Miss Le Gai is to be my wife. Is the name correct? Are you indeed Captain Swayne, an American?"

"That is correct, sir. I am Thomas Swayne, the son of Captain Cyrus Swayne, who was taken prisoner by the damned pirate, Porton, who has been given letters of marque by your government. I had letters from that man Porton demanding a ransom that is to be paid to you. Did Miss Le Gai tell you, sir, that before I saved her life I first endangered it by attacking the brig on which she was a passenger?"

"Wait if you please, sir. I am commissary of war here in Haiti. My duty is to see to it that our forces are loyal, that they do their duty and that they do not fail in zeal to the Republic. Sir, I know your country. I was with Citizen Genêt when he so disgraced our country while serving it. That is where I learned English. I assume of course, sir, that you have come here in time of war to release your father?"

"Of course. The letter from that pirate Porton said that you would receive the ransom money. That you would act as his agent. . . ."

The little Frenchman drew himself up and even in the dusk Tom could sense his wrath.

"I have been deceived and lied to," he said hotly. "When that man Porton came to me and told me that he had taken some prisoners for whom he desired to ask a ransom he already had letters of marque. Those letters had been granted to him over my official protest. I knew his reputation, but others" he mentioned no names "overruled my protest. It was decided that he was a good weapon to use in war and the letters were given him. Then he came to me. Still later I discovered that his prisoners had been taken while he was—frankly, sir—a pirate, that he was making use of the French honor to cover his crimes."

"Am I to understand, then, that you are no longer Porton's agent?"

Le Clave burst into a torrent of speech. French verbs and English nouns were mixed until even Tom grinned in the dark.

"Does a decent man consort with pirates and thieves?" asked Le Clave. "In this case, though I had severed all connection with him, I will act for him, because in this way I can help you secure the release of your father. Am I clear?"

"Very. Look you, Monsieur Le Clave, your country and mine are at war. I have the money. I will be perfectly frank with you. I took this money as prize of war from a French ship. Does this alter your feelings?"

"It may . . . when I shall have forgotten the debt I owe you. If Mademoiselle Le Gai had taken to those open boats she would possibly never have returned. Still, sir, I, too, will be frank. Monsieur Le Gai is a powerful man here. The matter will have to be referred to him. . . I mean about this man Porton who Miss Le Gai says attacked the brig. . . ."

Tom stood astounded. He had not

caught her hurried explanations to Le Clave. What had she told him? Why? Why should she let him believe that Porton had attacked the brig?

"Can you tell me where I can find this man Porton?" he asked.

"His ship lies at anchor off Fort Saint Louis at the west of the harbor," said Le Clave. "He landed today for a conference with the general, de Berrien, the military governor. Porton has some explanations to make about some arms that he is said to have sold to the slaves who are in revolt. His last cruise was very profitable, I believe. Too profitable for us to countenance. Also there are rumors that on his last cruise Porton took and sank a Spanish ship and we are at peace with Spain. That will need explanations. What is it?" he asked as Tom uttered a quick oath.

"I must get back to my ship," he said curtly. "I have done what I came for in landing Miss Le Gai. Tell me how to avoid the house of the general."

"It is the third house on the second street," said Le Clave. "You pass it as you go to the beach by the shortest path. There was a dinner there tonight. I think your friend Porton will be on his own corvette tonight. She is anchored between two French frigates. The general takes no chances."

"Where is Porton's home port?" asked Tom. "I have heard talk of an island named El Cubil."

"It is a tiny place," said Le Clave. "No man knows where it is except Porton himself. I have been told that he left his three prisoners there. You are going?" For Tom was holding out a hand to the girl. She drew him aside.

"You do not know w'at you have done," she said. "I did not weesh to go to France. My father 'e wish to 'ave me marry a frien' of his. Not Monsieur Le Clave. My fr'en', it mean all the world to us. I theenk I help you a lettle by tellin' Gaston that Porton captured ze brig. W'en Capitaine Benet return an' say that Porton sink ze brig, 'ow will my people feel toward zis man Porton?"

Tom looked at her in admiration.

"You will take Etion," she said. "He will not stay here. If he stay my people mak' him slave again. Also 'e hate Porton. An' now . . . God guard you."

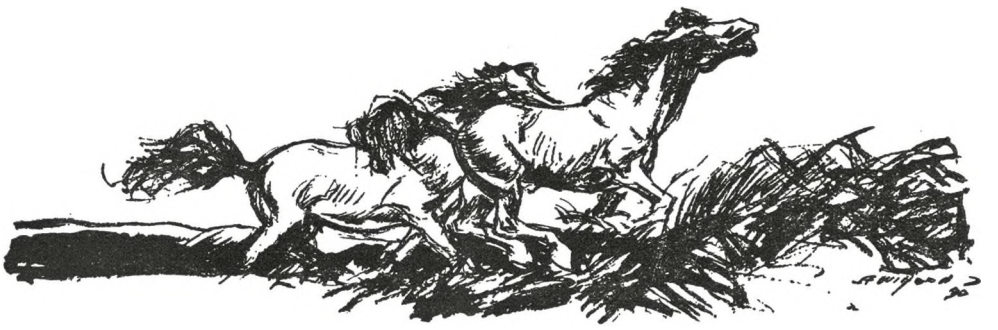
Etion touched his arm.

"I will show the nearest path to the sea," he said.

"The sea will always wait," said Tom. "Take me by the most secluded path to the house of the general."

His men eyed him as though not quite sure of his sanity, but they followed him down the tree-filled avenue.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



THE CAMP-FIRE

A meeting place for all.

THE song of the Yukon, says James B. Hendryx, was composed of the crunch of the shovel, the whack of the axe, and the deafening boom of a full house being laid down on a table. What he brought back was all in his head, but a great many good yarns have been the result, and now he brings us a new character out of those days—Jase Quill, the man who will doctor anything, with anything, any place and anyhow.

My sojourn in the Yukon country netted me about eighteen hundred dollars in dust, and a wealth of recollections. The eighteen hundred I lost in two nights in Skagway on the way outside trying to make five little ones beat five big ones—and that was all right, too. The recollections I will never lose.

I shoveled a lot of gravel to get mighty little gold. For wages, I chopped cordwood enough, seems like, to run a steamboat around the world. I tended bar, played cards and, while my luck held, hit a few of the high spots—but, the luck wouldn't hold for any great length of time, and then I would go back to chopping or shoveling. That was a long time ago—but even yet I yearn for neither. Shovel, and chop, and deal: deal, and shovel, and chop—that was the song that the Yukon sang to me. It's a nice song—but monotonous. Oh yes, I shot a lot of caribou and a few moose and peddled the meat at fifty cents a pound—good money while the caribou run was on, but otherwise, not so.

Jase Quill was one of those Moseses that always pop up on any creek to fill an emergency. Supremely egotistical and self-confident, they brag inordinately of their ability—and then, to the surprise of everyone, they make good.

The nurse I knew very well—know her still. And she's just as efficient, just as hard-boiled, as she was then. A lot older, that's the only difference. But, so are we all.

IT isn't always the fault of a horse that it becomes an outlaw, writes Henry Herbert Knibbs, whom we welcome back to our pages after an absence of four years. Sometimes it's the work of a smart-aleck top rider, who tries to prove his ability by punishing the horse as much as he can.

While in San Diego recently I stopped at the home of the late author, Eugene Manlove Rhodes, who knew more about "bad ones" than almost anyone I have met. It is not commonly known that Gene Rhodes was both by nature and by preference a breaker of wild horses. Had I his wonderful knowledge of the bronco on his native heath, I could fill *Adventure* with some interesting yarns. My personal experience has been limited to chasing the wild ones off the pinnacles in the White Mountains of Arizona.

Outlaw horses, real outlaws, are either born killers of men, or are, originally, broncos so full of fight that when they are corraled and ridden they become outlaws through fear combined with bad temper. I have seen many good possibilities among broncs spoiled by the show-off type of riders, who didn't care what became of the horse, but wanted to show the boys how good he was. I make a distinction between good riders and horsemen. A first class horseman may battle an untamed animal and teach him manners, but

he never makes a good possibility into an outlaw. Some top riders, to the contrary, seem to take a kind of brute pleasure in seeing how near they can come to killing a salty bronc. Sometimes the bronc gets the same idea and puts his rider permanently out of business. In such cases, I am always thankful.

Stallions fighting make a sight not common and not to be soon forgotten. In such cases one sees the primitive come to the top, and may learn a big lesson about the capabilities of a horse when fighting his own kind. Any horseman knows that a horse fighting another will try methods the same horse would never attempt fighting a man. I have seen some geldings put up a pretty hot battle, but never in the open; rather when in a small pasture or a corral or paddock. Like men, a horse that is not a fighter by nature will run. In fact, about the first thing a wild horse does when something alarms him is to get along right now; and then, from some pinnacle or point of advantage, turn and see what scared him.

I do not wish to start anything, but I have proven to a number of my friends and acquaintances that a domestic horse (a Navajo pony I once owned, for example) cannot only distinguish his master at a distance, but can actually distinguish his walk from the walk of anyone else. Years ago I used to walk, at night, on the cement sidewalk about one hundred feet from my corral where I kept two saddle ponies. When it was so dark neither I nor the pony could see one another, the Navajo would nicker the minute he heard my steps. A hundred people could pass in the day and he would pay no attention, or in the night, I should have said. Many persons did pass the corral, for it was then situated in what is now populous Hollywood.

Give my best to the Camp-Fire circle.

A FEW words about another story in this issue—"Jim Jeffries and Dumb Julius." First off, it's well written—I think everyone will agree to that. Some people, applying a strict definition of the word, might doubt that it is a story at all. I'm not sure but I suspect that it is.

Eddy Orcutt (he writes editorials for a San Diego, California, paper and is a close friend of Jim Jeffries) and his literary agent submitted the idea before it was written, because they felt doubtful the story would be taken by any other magazine, in case it were turned down here. It wouldn't fit requirements of length, plot, whatnot, but Orcutt wanted to do it—should he go ahead?

I enjoyed the yarn, and hope that you do. But admittedly it is experimental and off-trail, and editorially it is taking a chance with a large section of the issue. The verdict on this novelette will be unusually interesting, and I hope for many comments.

BILL ADAMS went and said something in Camp-Fire about women. Some women said something about what Bill Adams said. So Bill Adams remarks, regarding their remarks about his remarks, that he wants no argument with them, he is giving them the last word, and has only the following comment to make on the situation:

I have had in the last few days twenty-seven letters from females who seem not to approve of my remarks in Camp-Fire with regard to their sex. In that letter I said, "You can put your trust in a ship, and she won't go back on you. Heaven help the man who put his trust in a woman."——

That seems to have gotten under the skin of some of your evidently very numerous female readers.

Well, right there is one of the things in which the females get a masculine goat. They ain't got no sense of humor. Any female with half a grain of sense would have said, after reading my words, "That bird is just trying to start something, and he can't get me to fall for it."

You know, I know, all men who know anything at all, know, that the average woman has more courage in her little toe than has the average man in his entire carcass. We also know that, in the common ordinary little every day mixups of common ordinary everyday life, women are too—are apt to be too—illogical. For instance, some of the complaints I get are to the effect that it was not gentlemanly, not nice, to pretend to love a gal just for the sake of getting her picture; and then swapping the picture for grub or baccy. If said complainants knew anything they'd know that just as soon as we were at sea the gals who had vowed eternal

devotion to *us* forgot all about us; just as we forgot all about them. The trouble with these here complainants is probably that they all have a wart, or a pimple, or a mole, on the ends of their noses; and ain't any of 'em good enough looking for a sailor to notice. A plain case of jealousy, eh? Woman's pet failing again!

Well, I didn't mean to start an argument. I'm half Irish; and the Irish hate an argument, as well you know. I'll let the femmes have the last word. That's the one thing makes 'em happy. Good luck!

CONCERNING the cover which showed the sailor trying to teach a monkey how to tie a knot, Ralph Lewis of Franklin, Virginia, has something to say about the ancestry of critics.

I have just read the criticism in your April 15th issue concerning the cover picture of the March 1st issue, and would like to say:

Your late critic is without a doubt in the position to speak with authority concerning his monkey ancestors.

I have seen the monkeys in the Central American countries tangled in a net to the point where it was necessary to cut them out.

As to the "clothes line"; I have owned some eight windjammers, own one now and am building another, and think I have sailed more miles than your late critic has sailed feet, and I have always plenty of uses for the braided cotton line that he names "clothes line".

He never will get the idea behind the picture, and as to that, I may never, although it is framed and hanging within less than three feet of my nose as I write this.

And when he says, "We *Adventure* fans", I take it that he is trying to put me in the same class with him; and, if so, he is wrong; I was an A.B. and reading *Adventure* while he was wearing "square rig breeches".

Steady as she goes, never mind the narrow-minded critics.

AND Francis Rotch, master mariner of Seattle, Washington, wants to know if the same critic ever saw a log line.

Your sea-going comrade's criticism about the March 1st cover has its points, but he is all wet as to the line the fellow is knotting.

Ask him if he has ever seen a *log line*. As for sennit—fooy! Sennit is nothing but rope yarns braided in different patterns—flat—round—half round—diamond or a million different shapes. Sennit is used mostly for stops, footings, chafing gear and bending sails. Looks nothing like the stuff in the drawing. What the sailor is knotting is nothing more than a chunk of log line—a hard *braided* cotton line much like the common line used for window weights.

DOES anyone know what really happened to the passenger pigeons, or is this a mystery even to ornithologists? F. D. Nash of Washington, D. C., writes about them, but hasn't someone definite information?

The several recent articles in Camp-Fire, and that particularly in your April First issue regarding the mysterious pigeon flights, interest me very much.

I assume that these various comments all concern the same bird, the "passenger" pigeon, such as visited the southern states periodically in countless millions until about fifty years ago.

Why the bird is called a *pigeon* instead of a *dove* is the first mystery as it was almost an exact replica, except as to size, of the ordinary turtle dove—being about one and a half times as large.

As a very small boy in Southern Louisiana, I witnessed two small flights of these splendid birds, which occurred during consecutive winters about 1885 and '86, and to the best of my knowledge, I do not believe a single one has ever been seen since in that region.

I was particularly pleased to note in your April first issue the reader's statements about the appearance of these birds on the Pacific Coast in 1926 as I have understood from supposedly authentic sources that the last known living specimen on earth died in 1914 in the Cincinnati Zoo.

They were a splendid game bird and their extinction, if such has actually happened, was at once among the saddest and most mysterious events of bird life. Various theories have been advanced as to cause of their passing away, such as starvation, all being blown out by great storms into the sea, destruction by professional egg gatherers, extermination by some form of epidemic, etc., etc. The latter explanation is to me the only one at all plausible and it is only partially so as it is difficult to see how any kind of disease could be transmitted to all of these birds scattered through miles of Canadian wilderness where

they supposedly bred. It is true that countless thousands of them were killed on their southern migrations but it is equally true that very large numbers were not killed. The flocks which visited Louisiana fed entirely upon beech nuts as long as these were obtainable. Lacking these, they resorted to small pin oak acorns and along in the early spring considerable quantities of young tender pine buds or tips were consumed. They roosted only in dense thickets of small pine trees. Their stay in Louisiana coincided with that of ducks and Canadian geese. Here is hoping for comments from other observers.

THOSE flocks of pigeons on the Pacific coast are not surviving passenger pigeons, but band-tails, says Chester R. Werner, of Tacoma, Washington. They also were almost exterminated, but he tells us how they are coming back.

In the April 1st issue E. Krauth, of Milford, N. J., writing to Camp-Fire, wants us to believe the passenger pigeon is still with us here on the Pacific coast.

My belief is that the passenger pigeon was never found west of the Rocky Mountains, and it is a well-known fact that this pigeon has been extinct for forty or fifty years.

What Mr. Krauth evidently confuses with the passenger pigeon is our *band-tailed* pigeon. This bird is about the size of the common tame pigeon, the blue rock.

The band-tail is found all along the Pacific coast from Alaska to Mexico. Don't believe they are found east of the Cascade Mountains. They migrate south in the fall and north in the spring. These birds are to be seen in flocks at all times of the year in California, but the aggregation becomes larger in the winter.

Here in Washington they gather in flocks in late August and September and are usually all gone south by the middle of October.

Since 1913 when the Federal Migratory Bird Law went into effect they have been protected. In 1933 an open season was proclaimed, October 16th to 30th, inclusive. There has probably been some unlawful shooting, but no slaughter in the last twenty years.

Prior to 1913 the band-tail was almost exterminated, but they are slowly coming back. The reason for the slow comeback is because the female usually lays but one egg a season, rarely two. That was true also of the passenger pigeon.

I have hunted and fished in Washington for the past twenty-five years, and, I think, have shot every kind of game bird we have here. I know nothing of any ten-year cycle, nor can I find anyone here who has noted this fact. My idea is that these birds were more plentiful where their feed was in abundance. They feed on berries of all kinds, seeds and some insects, also on small acorns from scrub oaks found in some sections of this country.

These pigeons are dark blue in color. They have longer wings than the tame bird, hence fly much faster. They gather in trees toward evening, in fact, they may roost in the same trees for weeks if not disturbed. Years ago, when they were plentiful, evening was the favorite time for the game-hog to get in his work.

It has been several years since I have written a letter to Camp-Fire. I believe A. S. H. was editor and there was some talk of making *Adventure* a four times a month magazine. Here is hoping that you keep the magazine up to the standard set the past several months.

SEVERAL readers have offered suggestions to Mr. Westhoff of Papeete about how to keep his beer cool without ice. Along comes F. Leonard Marsland, of Greenwich, Nova Scotia, with complete directions. If the beer won't be ice cold, it will at any rate be "cold as a politician's heart."

I'd suggest Mr. Westhoff drinks it before it gets warm, but if this is impracticable, here's an outfit to keep butter hard, beer cold, and milk from souring.

Make a galvanized iron tray about 2½′x2½′x3″. Around the bottom of the sides drill, about 2″ apart, ¼″ holes. Outside, solder four or five small hooks on each side. Make another tray about 3′x3′x5″. Now make a stand of iron rod or wood about three bottles high, with shelves for each lot of bottles, and about the same size around the top as No. 1 tray. Next, get some thin towels, four, to be exact. Stitch the sides together and then fit them over the stand, fastening them at the top on the little hooks of tray No. 1. If there's a woman around, you might get her to make a little door or flap in one of the sides; if not, roll your sleeves up when you go for the beer. Now take the whole outfit into some shady spot where there will be a current of air, no matter how

slight; fill No. 2 tray with water and put the stand in it. The towels should be long enough to reach a couple of inches into the water of this tray. Then fill No. 1 tray with water. The little holes will let enough leak out so as to keep the towels always wet. The lower tray not only prevents the water from slopping over on the verandah, but will also keep out the ants, and ants like beer. Now put the beer inside this cloth-sided locker, leave for a couple of hours, remove, pour into glasses, being careful not to slop, and drink. It will be as cold as a politician's heart.

The mechanics of the thing is simple. As the water in the towels evaporates it absorbs heat from the interior of the locker. The current of air attends to the evaporation. I've used an outfit like this in the Gulf country of Northern Queensland, where the humidity has Tahiti skinned a million, also in Western Queensland, where there just isn't any humidity, only a temperature of around 120°. And I had one on the "Te Luana" right in Papeete a few years ago. It works. But I wish Mr. Westhoff could take some of this snow and ice down there with him, to cool his beer.

IN the last year a number of magazines have appeared which in some way used the word Adventure in their titles.

Now there's another one on the stands —Dime Adventure Magazine.

The difference this time is that the new magazine is owned by this company, which also publishes Dime Detective, Dime Mystery, Dime Western, all leaders in their fields.

It's all too easy to start a new magazine these days, and make an issue or two look good at small expense. You buy reprint rights to stories by well-known authors (reprint rights cost one-fifth or one-tenth the price of new stories). Possibly you change the titles so that the newsstand buyer doesn't recognize the stories as ones he has previously read until he has the magazine at home. If he gets mad about it then, he can cuss and throw the magazine away, but the publisher has the money. The goodwill of that author is somewhat injured too—it is the first time that reader ever got mad about anything that author wrote. When that reader sees the same author's name on another magazine (say *Adventure*, which has just paid an excellent price for a new story) there may be a slight film of suspicion over his eye, and who can blame him?

All such magazines fizzle out like dead firecrackers after a few issues (because in the publishing business, like any other, you can't go on fooling the patient, deluded, but in the long run darned-sick-and-tired-of-it public) but meanwhile harm is done to authors and legitimate publishers.

This company began a few years ago with one magazine, and now owns a large and successful group. Naturally its growth has been watched closely, and scattered shots heard round the publishing battlefield come from the rifles of imitators sniping at its titles.

Dime Adventure Magazine prints original stories, but it is not intended as a competitor or a little brother of *Adventure*. It is a good magazine in its field and at its price. It interferes in no way with the fact that *Adventure* is our main concern, as it should be.

This is neither an advertisement nor an apology, but an explanation to *Adventure* readers who might otherwise say to themselves, with some justification—now what is this all about?

MORE letters are coming in, and more good letters, and we want still more. The Camp-Fire takes another page this time, and so far as I'm concerned it can keep on growing—likely there isn't anything, in any magazine, more interesting to edit than this department. What we need to see soon, though, is a good heated debate about something, with some of the comrades throwing sticks at each other across the fire, and the rest of us (including me) ducking our heads out of the way of anything loose and flying.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

WHEN a man's fancy turns to his tool chest and he visions a woodland log cabin by a babbling brook, *Ask Adventure* has the information he needs.

Request:—I am going to build a log house for a permanent residence. The location is Allegan County, Michigan, on the shores of Lake Michigan.

I have several acres of wood land (the soil is quite sandy) but oak, black walnut, sassafras and fruit trees grow abundantly.

1. What kind of fir or evergreen trees could be planted with some assurance of success and what trees of this type would grow fastest?

2. Are oak logs, which I can purchase very reasonably in the vicinity, good for building the log house?

3. Should the bark be left on or would it be better to peel the logs? The building will be set on a concrete foundation and the spaces between the logs chinked with cement.

The winters are rather severe and the wind and sand remove the paint from a house in a short time. I am of the opinion that the bark will serve as a protection but I wonder if there are drawbacks to leaving it on.

—H. R. VERNON, Detroit, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Ernest W. Shaw:—(1) Almost any cone-fir transplants from a tree nursery will grow and do well, I should think, in your location. I believe that any of the balsams, Norway spruce, and white spruce, or Englemann spruce, will do particularly well. Perhaps the Norway will grow a bit faster than the others.

(2) Yes, oak logs, if straight and carrying their weight well, can be used. They will do excellently except that they will, of course, be harder to work than a softer wood, say spruce, (more of this later).

(3) Yes, the logs should be peeled, and if this can be done early in the spring when the sap is coming up, the surfaces will be smooth, no inner bark left on, and when the building is up and completed, the logs can be stained with a creosote stain, or oiled. I prefer the latter. If the bark is left on, beetles and wood worms will enter, and eat channels under the bark, causing it to slip eventually. If oiled, with boiled linseed oil put on warm, the finish is excellent. Oil can be applied again in later years when necessary. *By all means peel them.*

Now to your logs: If you can obtain spruce without too great expense, I should use that. In any case for best appearance, such as a permanent residence requires, the logs should be straight, with as little a taper as can be obtained. This enables the workmen to bring up all four corners to approximately the same level, with about the same width of space between the logs, adding greatly to the appearance of the building. When applying the cement or mortar to the outside cracks, first rip lath down the center lengthwise, nailing them on lengthwise of each log at the point where the lower edge of the mortar will come. Then apply the mortar to the crack above the lath using same as a straightedge. This will hold the mortar in place after it hardens and shrinks—as it will to some extent.

If you desire a nice finish inside, such as three-ply fir board (which is exceptionally fine for such a building), or celotex, which is a great non-conductor of both heat or cold, then the logs should either be run through a mill, taking off one good slab on one face, for the inside face, or if you

have a good axeman in your crew, or broad-axe man, the logs can be hewed on the inside face as they are laid up. This gives you a smooth, flat, even surface (if done with care) to finish on, no matter what your inside finish is to be. Lath and plaster work very well on this surface, except that it is particularly necessary to wait some time for the logs to settle before you can safely plaster.

I suggest that you use the flat notch at corners, sawing the ends off flush with the outside surface. This will enable you to put on corner boards for a finish that can be painted like the rest of the outside trim, and will protect the corners from the weather, and save decay.

All openings should be cut in, or rather sawed down after the walls are erected. To do this all openings for doors, windows, etc., should be determined in advance, and the log at the top of each opening should be sawed into on the under side at what will be the proper height for that opening. This provides a saw channel for the entrance of a saw later when the time comes for sawing down the openings. Preparing openings this way is stronger construction than to prepare the openings during erection of walls. Make openings large enough so that two-inch material can be firmly spiked to each log (against the face of each log) in the opening, making a facing for the finished framing.

The cement foundation is excellent. There is no more reason to build a log house on the ground than any good building. Be sure that your foundation is high enough so that there will be no rain splash against the lower logs.

AND another answer to the same question.

Request:—I have a small property in Oregon, well timbered. It is my desire to do a little "Swiss Family Robinson" back to the soil movement. Was born and raised in the West; lived in log cabins, but never constructed one.

1. Can you give me details for the construction of a log cabin suitable for a family of four?

2. Would it be feasible for one man, with all reasonable mechanical contrivances, such as hoists, etc., to erect a decent cabin.

3. Give details for construction of a large fireplace. Stone, brick or concrete are available.

4. Are shingles suitable for permanence in roofing?

5. Can you suggest any suitable books covering the construction of a permanent camp such as this?

6. How should a natural spring be cleaned out and made available for drinking and cooking purposes?

7. What is your idea of a darn good camp fire for cooking purposes?

—BASIL B. TAYLOR, Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—Sorry I am not enough of a draftsman to draw detailed plans of the cabin for you, and would suggest that you have your bookseller get you a copy of "The Real Log Cabin," by Aldrich (MacMillan). That will be of greatest assistance in your work.

It might be possible for one man to raise a cabin with hoists, etc., but I'm afraid hardly practicable. Two men, with mechanical assistance in handling the heavy weights, should be easily able to do the trick.

By all means have your chimneys of stone, for that type is most in keeping with a log building.

Better than shingles are the hand-riven "shakes." You may be able to get some backwoodsman to make them for you. Good shingles, not too thin, are second choice, and will last for years. Metal or composition roofs are both out of keeping with a log house.

To clean a natural spring; rake out all leaves, muck, until you have a hole eight to ten inches larger in diameter than you wish the final aperture to be. Then case this up, with concrete or brick, as high as desired and fill the bottom with clean sand. Leave a hole near the top large enough to carry off the flow. If the spring is above the cabin a pipe can be inserted in the casing to supply running water. A wood or wire cover will keep out leaves or dirt. If the opening in the casing is made big enough to give room for a few vessels the spring can be used for keeping milk, butter, etc., cool as well as supplying water.

For cooking purposes, use only hardwoods for fuel, if possible, and keep the fire just as small as will serve the purpose. Many a meal have I cooked over a fire you could almost cover with your hat. Two rows of stones eight inches apart and ten inches high, with the fire between, make a good range. Lay the rocks so the length of the range will be parallel to the way the wind is blowing, so you will have good draft, and have your fuel split, no bigger than the wrist.

If you use a reflecting baker for bread (best way of making it in camp) do your baking when the fire is high, just after kindling it, and before it burns down to coals. That's a good time to start the pot boiling, too. Frying, broiling, etc., is best done over a bed of coals. That's where the hardwoods show their worth, for few of the softwoods give coals that last. Hickory, oak, maple and birch are all good fuels.

PROBLEM. Given two Australian adventurers with $350. Get them from 'Frisco to New York, without missing a trick.

Request:—A friend and I have been offered jobs in England. As we have already made the trip via Suez we should very much like to travel this time through U. S. A. Our idea is to land at San Francisco and make a leisurely trip across to New York by car, getting as wide and varied a view of America and Americans as we can en route. But we shall have very little money—$350—between us for the trip across, exclusive of sea travel, and we should appreciate your advice on the following points:

1. Car:—What would be the cheapest we could get a reliable car to carry two, appearance not being a great consideration? Could we get one for as little as $150 (about the maximum we could afford) and if so would there be any difficulty about disposing of it in a state other than the one we bought it in?

2. Driving license and registration:—Would an Australian permit to drive be considered sufficient evidence of driving ability or would a fresh police test be necessary?

3. Petrol and oil:—What would be a fair average price for these items taken over the whole trip from coast to coast?

4. Route:—Our ideas about this are very vague. We must start from San Francisco or Los Angeles, as the Australian mail-boat lands us there, and we wish to take in Taos, New Mexico, where we have friends, and possibly Chicago, but apart from these and our finishing point, New York, we have no preferences. Within the limits of our cash we would not be particularly pressed for time. Where could we obtain information about a route which would not only show us most places of scenic and historical interest but also something of what an Australian would call "Unknown America"?

5. Maps:—Are there any which you would particularly recommend?

6. Places to sleep:—Is it possible to make a trip of this sort in U. S. without having recourse to expensive hotels? We are quite prepared to rough it, sleeping out or in the car, but in wet weather it is sometimes imperative to have a roof over one's head.

7. Cost of living:—Would it be cheaper, on the whole, to prepare one's own meals, or to buy the main ones? Could you give me an idea of the relative expense, on an average three-meals-a-day's basis? Is the cost of living very high in the U. S., as one is led to believe, or has it, like everywhere else, come down considerably since the depression?

—ROBERT A. SHAW, Victoria, Australia

Reply by Major C. Percival:—The sum of $350, American money, will be more than sufficient to enable you two to make a leisurely trip of thirty days from 'Frisco to New York. You can buy a second-hand Ford or Chevrolet of the open-body type very reasonably in 'Frisco—around $100. You will have to take out a non-resident operator's license. The license for the car will enable you to travel in most states for a period of six months, in others ninety days. If you have an Australian driver's license, bring it along. The driver's test is very easy—if you have to take it.

When you arrive in New York you can sell your car to anyone, providing you have a Californian "Bill of Sale" for the car and the California license and plates. You can always get $50 for the car if it is in a drivable condition.

I advise a Ford, Chevrolet—open-body type (touring car). You can buy spare parts in every city and town at dealers of our five and ten cent auto supply stores cheap.

The cost of a Ford or Chevrolet touring car license is around $5 for one year. Gasoline runs from fifteen to twenty cents a gallon. This includes the State and Federal tax which is absorbed at distillery before selling to operator. Each state makes its own tax. A Chevrolet or Ford would average $50 for gas and oil for the 4,000 miles across.

As to route:—I would not care to answer this until I knew the exact date of arrival in California. Our climatic changes make what we call the Northern route not so good until after June, owing to the winter and final melting of heavy snows in the several ranges of mountains (Rocky and Sierra).

I would advise not to bother about the route but wait until arrival in California and then consult the Auto Club of South California who have some thirty branch offices in the state and the various big oil companies (these give free the most beautifully executed, up-to-date maps and also route out

for tourists the best route at the time asked for with all necessary detours). Here in America a good route of today may be out of the question months later owing to repairs, maintenance work and floods and washouts. This is not so after you leave Chicago, going east. If things are o.k. I would suggest going from 'Frisco, south to Los Angeles and take what we call the old Spanish trail to Taos over the Raton Pass, then to Chicago and from Chicago the Dixie Highway to Jacksonville and Miami, Florida, and north to New York City. This makes the trip a few hundred miles longer but gives you a graphic historical trip of the United States.

From New York you could go northeast—that is, Cape Cod and Maine in a week. This would take in Quebec and Montreal—1,400 miles—worth the trip; save a few dollars for it. You make a round about tour which will bring you back to New York by Niagara Falls and beautiful New York state with its lakes and Indian lore.

You can buy a good auto (lean to) tent at Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward Companies (they are our big mail order houses with branches in every big city) or at what we call Army & Navy Stores for $10. These tents sleep two. This style tent is shaped like one-half of the letter "A" and uses the car for poles so you can dress in the car. Then a two-burner gasoline "Gypsy" stove which uses fuel from car ($3.75), then a "nested cooking and eating set"—($5); this consists of 10 and 8-quart pail, dishes, etc., nest inside and fry pan makes cover of pail. Then a couple of what we call "Kapo Sleeping Pads" (Ceiba Silk), $3 each. These, with your own blankets or traveling rugs, make up your bedding outfit which can be rolled up and carried in "Sailor Ditty or Barracks bags"—obtainable at any Army & Navy store for fifty cents each. Your baggage can be carried inside the car. The tent, rolled up to a forty-eight inch bundle, can go on the running board in a luggage carrier ($1). You can get a trunk rack for the rear of the car (attached to bumper and goose-necks) $2.50. Then all you need is inner tube repair outfit, skid chains or mud hooks ($1.50), folding canvas water pail (field artillery bucket), fifty cents, same old Army & Navy store where you can get a Boy Scout belt axe and demountable spade for total of $1.50 more; also an ordinary kerosene lantern, seventy-five cents. That's all outside of first-aid kit, soap, flash light, etc. A suit of good army breeches are to be recommended. Your food, that is breakfast and supper, would cost you fifty cents total if you prepare it yourself. Buy your noon meal at a thirty-five cent average per. It doesn't pay to stop, pack and unpack at noon when you could be driving in sunlight and looking at scenery. You've got to do this at night and morning so why not buy a good meal at noon and break up the monotony of cooking three times a day? It's worthwhile and many times saves a trip from going smash. I don't see why $100 would not cover cost of food, entertainment, etc., on the thirty-day trip. I've been to the coast with two for less than that (gas, of course, extra). Breakfast is cheap and a $2.75 running board ice chest sometimes makes the trip more economical and comfortable.

If you tent you will find most of the camps free but it's worthwhile to stop at the pay camps (fifty cents) where they have toilet and bath facilities. Cabins range from fifty cents to $1 per person (cheaper west of Chicago and more east) so that the cost of tent will be made up by the saving of cabin charges. I advise tenting and cooking—with cabins only in heavy rain storms or bad weather.

Sunday is a good day to lay over, clean up and rest and avoid the extra heavy Sunday or week-end auto traffic always encountered.

Also in some regions congestion at camps.

Cost of living at present in United States a little higher than a year ago but we live fairly reasonably.

Look camps over and take all the free municipal camps you can. Some are really wonderful.

When you stop over you don't burn gas. Remember one thing—*You can't burn ethyl or treated petrol in camp gas stoves*—so carry pure *untreated gasoline in gallon auxiliary can.*

Good luck—you'll have a grand trip.

AFRICAN natives armed with relics of 1871 defend their mountain fastnesses—the real situation in Abyssinia today, where war with Italy would be all one-sided.

Request:—As a reserve officer I take a keen interest in the threatened war between Italy and Abyssinia, and as you are quoted as being an authority on matters pertaining to Abyssinia I take the liberty of asking the following questions:

Can you give me some details of the crushing defeat inflicted on the Italians in 1896 by the Abyssinians under King Menelik? What was the number of Italians engaged?

Their losses? The approximate number of Abyssinians engaged? Their losses?

I understand that the Italians were trapped in a mountain gorge and attacked in front and on both flanks by overwhelming numbers and utterly routed. Is that correct?

In the event of a serious war between the two countries, do you think that Italy with the assistance of planes and tanks will quickly defeat the Abyssinians?

—LEWIS O. BARTON, Clifton, Texas.

Reply by Mr. Gordon MacCreagh:—Your airmail enquiry has come to me at Florida. The small delay does not matter. For nothing is going to happen in Abyssinia for at least three months.

The Italian forces can't enter the country on rhetoric and flag-waving. On the fifteenth of February the rainy season commenced, and the country will remain utterly impassable, even to horses and mules, until around mid-May. Animals will bog belly-deep in the awful clay gumbo that they call "Chica." Artillery is out of the question. Air bombing is unlikely on account of the mountains and the fierce storms that whirl over them. The country is definitely "closed."

The only road in is the French railway from Djibouti in French Somaliland into Addis Abeba, the Ethiopian capital. That road must, of course, remain neutral—unless international "diplomacy" agrees upon some sort of a division of spoils and engineers a killing somewhere along the French-Ethiopian border to make an excuse for war.

Don't laugh. The history of Africa shows more than one parallel. And a killing, at that, doesn't have to be serious. Any naked savage living on European-controlled territory is a "subject" of that nation, and his death would furnish cause for military advance to "protect nationals." It's been done before; and with European politics as they flutter just now—ententes and accords and secret agreements, Abyssinia would be but a small pawn in the game.

As to the details of Adowa. I can't give you any. Nor, I believe, can anybody give you any accurate data, outside of the Italian high command—which good and damn surely won't.

The Abyssinians, of course, have no official records. They couldn't, if they would, even begin to estimate how many men were engaged. Each chief brought his gang; and that's about as close as we can get. The chiefs all try to boost up the numbers of their own gangs in order to show their patriotism and service to their king and country. African-like, their boosts aren't limited by mere duplication, or even triplication. A back woods chiefling whose total fighting force might amount to a couple of hundred men will brag that he came in with two thousand. There's absolutely no check up on the Abyssinian end.

The Italians, naturally, have always tried to minimize the number and equipment of their own forces. The official press utterances have always been—they are now completely forbidden by the Mussolini—that a small scouting force was set upon by a vast army and was compelled, only after annihilating thousands of their enemies and only through lack of further ammunition, to surrender.

The meager facts that can be gathered seem to show that a force of some ten thousand Italians entered the country. Politics at home and fear of recall impelled the general in command to push forward and, as he hoped, place a victory to his credit.

Old Menelek, a shrewd old gent, though ignorant of all modern military procedure, divided up his crowd into three mobs—that is all they were, undisciplined mobs, fighting, as in Feudal times, each under its own chief. One mob lured the Italians to chase them down the steep valley of Adowa and the other two mobs then jumped them from the hills on either side.

Without any manner of doubt the Italians were considerably outnumbered; for whatever official records may say, the Abyssinians were armed mostly with spears and shields. True, many of them had rifles. BUT those rifles were the old French "Fusil Gras," discarded after the Franco-Prussian war, and the ammunition was what went with them. And that is about all that the mass of Abyssinians are armed with right now.

Again, despite official records of "heroic defense," it seems that most of the Italian troops were captured alive, along with their whole equipment. For some nine thousand of the "small expeditionary force" were brought into Addis Abeba, and it was upon those hostages that the Italians paid the huge indemnity that remains the outstanding record, the only thing of its kind ever exacted by an African people out of an European nation.

As to the results of another war between the two. There cannot be any possibility of doubt. Italy today is equipped with modern supplies and methods. Abyssinia remains *defenseless*. I use the word advisedly, for the reason that England, France, and Italy, the three nations that surround Abyssinia's borders, have combined in an agreement to main-

tain a strict embargo upon weapons entering Abyssinia. With the exception of such weapons as have been smuggled into the country, Abyssinia today is armed with the same old "Fusil Gras" rifles—and the identical *same old ammunition!* You, as a military man, know to what extent even the most intensive smuggling can equip a nation for a war against a modern military power. That answers your question more thoroughly than pages of argument.

As to the probability of war. That is more difficult to predict. The reasons for a war remain. Abyssinia is probably the richest part of Africa. Abyssinia has a white man's climate. Abyssinia can grow two crops of any food grain per year. Abyssinia is the only portion of the world that has not already been grabbed off by one or another of the big European powers for a colony. Italy owns three small pieces of soil in Africa —all of them deserts. Italy must have a colony to which she can send her new babies ordered by Mussolini.

Reason enough for a war. Whether the League of Nations will be able to stop it is a question that has until the end of the rainy season to be decided.

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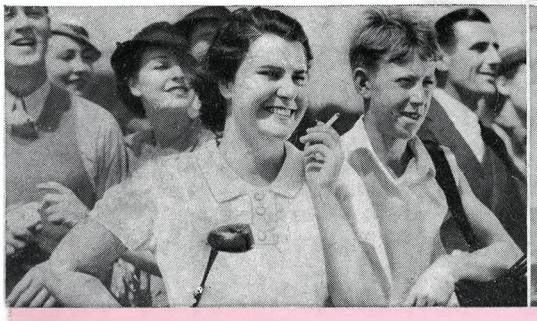

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